

DOCTORAL THESIS

Exploring the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers

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**Exploring the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female
early years teachers**

By

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers in England. A feminist social constructionist framework was adopted in order to gain a greater understanding how early years teaching has been framed by the concept of gender. Bourdieu's theoretical tools of habitus and institutional habitus were utilised in order to give greater consideration to how the social world and early childhood may have influenced the formation of the study participants' pedagogical beliefs. A two-phase life history interview method was utilised in order to provide the twelve study participants with the opportunity to discuss their personal and professional lives. Both phases involved an interview, with the second phase utilising objects and photographs, chosen by the participants to represent their pedagogical beliefs and used as a stimulus for further reflective discussion. Data were analysed through a thematic analysis approach.

The findings from the study suggest that there are a range of factors that influence the formation of female early years teachers pedagogical beliefs. The role of the past played a significant part, with childhood and school memories and maternal influences being particularly significant. The values and dispositions that were established in the participants' childhoods were often taken into their pedagogy. The impact of a maternal identity was also a key factor, from a personal perspective the participants own maternal identity and influence from their mothers was significant. From a wider societal perspective, the construction of the female early years teacher in a maternal, caring role had also been influential. Wider influences included policy and the historical legacy of early years education, which had created key early years pedagogical principles that the participants identified with. There was also evidence of how the participants' pedagogy had developed and changed over time highlighting the importance of engaging in thinking and discussion but also the responsibility of the individual teacher in actively challenging their beliefs.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BEd – Bachelor of Education degree (provides qualified teacher status)

EYFS – Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum (birth to five age range)

GTTP – Graduate Teacher Training Programme – a school based teacher training programme

Key Stage 1 – Years 1 and 2 (age range 5-7 year olds)

Key Stage 2 – Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 (age range 7 – 11 year olds)

NNEB – (National Nursery Examination Board) a two-year diploma course in child development

Nursery – (age range 3 – 4 year olds) children can complete their nursery year in a range of settings e.g. school, private day care, child minders

NQT – Newly Qualified Teacher

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills – the department which inspects schools and services that care for children and young people

PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education (a teaching qualification)

Reception – the final year of the EYFS (age range 4-5 year olds - most children will complete a full year in a reception class)

QTS – Qualified Teacher Status

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Background to the research project

This study seeks to explore how female early years teachers form their pedagogical beliefs. As a practising early years teacher myself, the motivation for the study comes from my own experience of teaching in the early years sector for 15 years. I have been connected to the early years profession all of my academic and working life, having undertaken an early childhood studies degree and then a PGCE specialising in early years, and then teaching within the 3-5 year old range for all of my career. For the past 11 years I have held a middle management role, overseeing teams of teachers, early years practitioners and teaching assistants. Through studying, teaching experience and from my own background I have developed my pedagogy and over the years have become increasingly more confident in being able to articulate my ideas and beliefs. Having taught in a number of different schools during my career, I have had a range of experiences. As an early years teacher I have at times felt valued and listened to, and at other times felt ignored. I have had the experience of teaching in schools very much aligned to my pedagogy where I have had a lot of professional autonomy, but also times when I have had to compromise my beliefs which has been very challenging. Having worked with many different practitioners, I have been interested in the range of different approaches and values, but also many of the similarities. I know from my own experience there are certain things I feel incredibly passionate about, particularly in connection to

the type of experiences I want children to have. I am curious as to where those passions and beliefs come from, and I know that from talking to colleagues, I'm not alone in having strong educational beliefs and ideas.

Aims of the study

This research will explore the influences that have shaped the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers, by addressing the following research questions:

- What are the key influencing factors that shape the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers?
- How does the participants' gender identity influence the formation of those beliefs?
- What role does childhood and family background play in shaping the participants' pedagogical beliefs?

Alexander (2008) suggests a teachers' pedagogy is multi faceted and influenced by a range of individual and wider societal domains for example, childhood, family background, gender identity, community and society. In this research I aim to gain a greater understanding of the content of these key factors that have shaped and influenced my participants' pedagogical formation. Research in early education suggests that early years teachers struggle to articulate their pedagogy, with teachers finding it easier to describe their teaching in terms of *what* they are doing rather than *why* they are doing it (Moyles et al., 2002, 2002a;

Stephen, 2010). Some scholars suggest (Birmingham, 2012; Moyles et al., 2002, 2002a) that in order to gain a greater understanding of pedagogy, providing opportunities for teachers to engage in discussion and reflection is necessary, so that their pedagogy becomes more visible and less tacit.

Through this study I wanted to provide an opportunity to listen to early years teachers' ideas and beliefs and gain a greater understanding of their pedagogy and how their pedagogical beliefs have been shaped and formed

Research projects in early education such as The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research project (Sylva et al., 1999) have identified the pedagogic practices being used in the most effective early years settings. However, there is a need for research that focuses on gaining a better understanding of who the teachers who deliver these pedagogic practices are and how their pedagogy is formed.

Through conducting life history interviews, I provided an opportunity for early years teachers to talk about and reflect on their pedagogical beliefs, and use a method that would enable them to discuss various aspects of their personal and professional lives. The subjective nature of the life history method makes it well suited to exploring teachers' perceptions, ideal and beliefs, as it provides an opportunity for the person telling their story to share their experiences and perceptions of their own life (Goodson & Sikes, 2008).

The theoretical framework informing the study is located within a social constructionist approach. Social constructionism takes the view that the world is socially constructed by the individuals who live in it and the meanings that individuals make, are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural understanding (Burr, 2003; Creswell, 2007). A social constructionist framework supports a life history method, which is concerned with individual lives and their relationship with wider historical and social contexts (Goodson & Sikes, 2008). I particularly draw upon a feminist social constructionist perspective and the work of key educationalist feminists (Acker, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Skelton, Francis & Smulyn, 2009; Skelton & Francis 2009; Smulyn, 2004) and their theorisation of gender as socially constructed. This theoretical approach considers how early years teaching has been organised and framed by the concept of gender as socially constructed and how the feminisation of teaching may have influenced how my participants have formed their pedagogical beliefs.

I also draw on the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and his theoretical tools of habitus and institutional habitus in order to gain a greater understanding of how the social world and early childhood has influenced the formation of my participants' pedagogical beliefs. Researching the participants' habitus has enabled me to explore their dispositions, attitudes and tastes and the influence of wider societal cultural values and norms on the formation of these characteristics.

These theoretical ideas seem particularly apt to this study, which is focusing on how individual and wider societal and historical fields have influenced early years teachers pedagogical formation. This conceptual focus will help to identify the various factors and the content of those factors that influence pedagogical formation.

Context of the Study

This study is set within an English context. Although part of the United Kingdom, England has a distinctive and unique education curriculum from the other UK countries. I use the term ‘early years teachers’ to describe a qualified teacher (holds qualified teacher status QTS) who is working within the 0-5 age range. The term ‘early years teacher’ should not be confused with the introduction in 2013, of the early years teacher status (EYTS) qualification. This qualification does not currently have equal status to a qualified teacher, as it does not provide qualified teacher status (QTS). I specifically chose to use the term early years teacher as this is a distinct phase of education in England, following a separate curriculum to the rest of the primary stage. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum (EYFS) (DfE, 2017) encompasses the birth to five age range and is the curriculum for all state, private and voluntary providers of care and education within the early years. The participants for the study were teaching in state and independent schools and in Children’s Centres. Children’s Centres provide a variety of services to families with children from birth to five. They have a range of professionals working in them, including qualified teachers.

Outline of the thesis

The literature review (chapter two) starts by placing early years education in England within a historical and political context. It examines the influence of key pioneers of early education, such as Robert Owen (1771-1858), Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) and Rachel (1859-1917) and Margaret McMillan (1860-1931) and how they have influenced the development of policy and early years pedagogy. It also highlights some of the traditional pedagogical principles of early years education and the construction of the child. The development of early years policy in England is also explored and some of the pedagogical tensions that exists between the early years curriculum and the primary curriculum are highlighted. The second part of the literature review examines pedagogy and how pedagogical beliefs are developed. The final section explores how early years teachers are positioned within society and examines the position of women as early years teachers from a gendered perspective.

In chapter three the theoretical framework for the study is presented and the conceptual focus explained.

The design of the research is presented in chapter four, with an outline of the qualitative life history approach undertaken. Background details of the participants are presented and the ethical challenges faced within the study are examined and discussed. The approach to data analysis through a process of thematic analysis is presented.

Chapter five provides further information on the study participants, as their life histories are shared.

Chapters six, seven and eight present the findings of the study. Chapter six examines the influence of the participants' childhoods and family backgrounds on their pedagogical formation, particularly highlighting the influence of mothers and childhood memoirs. Chapter seven explores how the participants became early years teachers and looks at how the influence of teacher training, female relatives and teachers becoming mothers influenced their pedagogical beliefs. Chapter eight examines the wider influences on the participants' pedagogical beliefs, such as government policy and the historical legacy of early years. This chapter also highlights the shared pedagogical beliefs amongst the participants and how these relate to current early years policy and practice.

Chapter nine concludes the study and summarises the findings and implications of the research project.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the literature that is related to the focus of the study, which explores the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers. The review examines significant literature related to the study and this chapter begins to frame the argument and philosophical approach of the study.

This chapter is organised into three sections. The first section examines the development of early childhood education in England and seeks to place it within a historical and political context as well as examining some of the traditional pedagogical principles of early years education and the construction of the child. The second section explores pedagogy, how it develops and looks at recent research into pedagogy and pedagogical formation in the early years sector. The final section examines identity and looks specifically at the nature of gender, class and teaching and how female early years teachers have been positioned within society.

Early Childhood Education: A historical and political context

History plays an important role in this study; the life histories of twelve female early years teachers form the basis of this project. In order to begin to understand how early years teachers' pedagogical beliefs are formed, an understanding of

the development and history of the early years sector is necessary. By viewing early childhood education through historical events and their political contexts, new meaning and insights can be gained (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). Moss (2014) argues that the story of early childhood education needs to be heard and is connected to and shaped by political, social and cultural narratives. These narratives can become dominant discourses, which then form prevailing truths about early childhood education thus impacting on policy, pedagogy and practice.

This section will present a critical discussion of the development of early years education in England through a historical lens, focusing on pioneers, key events and how the political context and policy has shaped the early years curriculum. Some of the pedagogical practices that are embedded within this phase of education in England will also be explored. I will examine the theoretical premise that children and childhood are social constructions in relation to how early childhood has developed to highlight how educational policy has influenced the construction of the child and childhood both recently and historically. By examining the historical, political and cultural constructions of early years education in England, it is possible to have a greater understanding of the contemporary context and a fuller appreciation of why and how certain pedagogic traditions have developed in early years and how these may impact on current early years teachers' pedagogical approaches.

Early Years – a historical legacy

During the mid 1700s in the UK, there were moves to provide education for young children. These early schools were linked to religious initiatives and over the next century schools developed not just through the religious system but also through social and political motivations. Monitorial schools were the first popular schools and were developed by the Quaker Joseph Lancaster and the Anglican Andrew Bell (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). The focus of these schools was formal learning by rote and few children from poor families had access to education. Children were taught in large groups with no consideration that children learn at different rates or in different ways (Bartlett & Burton, 2012). Prior to this, European educational theorists had been developing educational ideas that would go on to influence British education (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). For example, Comenius (1592 – 1670) developed ideas about teaching theory, subject matter and the organisation of schools. He had strong ideas about the unity of natural, human and divine world. The theme of unity and nature is evident in Froebel's educational theory. Froebel (1782-1852) was a student of Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and is well known for his development of the Kindergarten. Froebel was the first educationalist to develop educational principles specifically for young children within his kindergarten pedagogy (Tovey, 2013). His theories and principles engaged international audiences having a significant influence on the early childhood movement in the UK (Brehony, 2006).

Froebel's curriculum was concerned with exploration and play with three-dimensional activities that he called 'gifts and occupations' (Bruce, 2011). His gifts were a series of wooden blocks that were presented at different stages to the child. He put great emphasis on the type of materials and objects that were provided for children. He saw these materials and activities as a way for a child to explore his or her surroundings and find out the shape, texture and function of things (Lilley, 1967). Froebel was the first educator to talk about children playing and as Liebschner states, 'no philosopher, no educator before Froebel has seen the importance of play for educational purposes with such clarity' (1992:63).

In England, Robert Owen (1771-1858), a cotton mill owner in New Lanark, was, like Froebel, strongly influenced by Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Owen set up schools that very much differed from the traditional Monitorial system developed by Lancaster and Bell. He believed that it was 'not enough now to teach children to know their place, to become obedient and docile; they must become rational and useful members of society' (Stewart & McCann, 1967:60). In 1816, Owen established the first infant school in the UK for children aged 2 to 6. Key features of the school were providing opportunities for the children to exercise, sing and explore objects. The children were to have the opportunity to talk and ask questions and to be active and play (Read, 2006).

The 1870 Education Act established compulsory elementary education from the age of five and helped to establish school boards in areas that were lacking (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). Due to the unhealthy living conditions of many

children, those under the age of five were admitted to elementary schools. In 1905 the Board of Education, following an inspection on the admission of children under five to elementary schools and the suitability of the curriculum, recommended that children under the age of five needed separate facilities and the mechanical teaching methods used in elementary schools at that time were not appropriate for children of this age.

The development of Owen's school and the establishment of compulsory schooling signalled a view of childhood that was distinctly different from adulthood, that children had particular needs. Through compulsory schooling, education was seen as an effective instrument of social control and change, and also created a view of 'the child' that could be applied to all children, 'the national school child' (James & James, 2004).

At the end of the 19th century the influence from European educationalists continued to have impact on the development of early childhood education in England. Advocates of Froebel's pedagogy found support in England and a Froebelian movement grew. Between 1880 to 1920 saw the most significant period of support for the Kindergarten movement and important networks and organisations that promoted Froebelian principles were founded (Dombkowski, 2002). Kindergartens began to be established and in 1894 the Froebelian Educational Institute for teacher training was founded in London. The advocates of Froebelian pedagogy came from a liberal, middle class group of women with an interest in innovative educational practices (Read, 2006) and this was at odds with educational practices in state school, as Blundell highlights:

The emphasis upon a spiritual, even mystical, undertow to the practices of the kindergarten place Froebelianism unsurprisingly at odds with the utilitarian aims and instrumentally inclined realities of the State Elementary school (2012:51).

At this time there were other key educational figures, such as Maria Montessori and Rachel and Margaret McMillan influencing early years and advocating ways of educating young children which focused on the child themselves (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). The influence of key early years pioneers such as Froebel, Montessori and the McMillan's, began to challenge the current established educational system. Read (2006) highlights the differences in the Froebelian approach compared to the approach taken in the babies' classes and infant schools which were established at the turn of the century. The state system focussed on rote learning, in large groups with children sitting in galleried classrooms. Whereas an approach based on Froebelian principles would have called for play and active learning.

The Montessori method, established by Maria Montessori (1870-1952) also challenged the state system. Montessori designed teaching materials that allowed children to use their senses in learning. The materials were to be used in specific ways and children accessed them individually. Like Froebel, Montessori took a holistic view of the child. Although their philosophies differed in many ways, these progressive ideas about education presented a very different view of the child to the one endorsed by the state system. Inspection reports from the early 20th century of schools using Montessori principles show they were at odds with the principles of Elementary schools and often received negative reports (Brehony, 2000).

However, it was the influence of these more progressive educational ideals coupled with a growing concern about child health that helped the establishment of specific facilities for early years. In 1913 Margaret McMillan (1860-1931), along with her sister Rachel McMillan (1859 – 1917) founded the Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery in Deptford in London. When establishing their own nursery practice, they looked to the Froebelian movement for inspiration (Giardiello, 2014). The nursery catered for children living in the slum areas of Deptford and there was a clear focus on health, care and education. The children had lots of access to fresh air and exercise as the nursery consisted of shelters and a large garden. Physical care was of high importance and the children were well nourished, washed and given clean clothes (Jarvis et al., 2017). The McMillan's emphasis on care and education laid the foundations for the State nursery school and can be seen as the precursor for integrated Children's Centres which were established in the 1990's (Blundell, 2012). The McMillan's were part of a more progressive movement, influenced by the Froebelian movement that wanted to address social justice and saw education as a way to social transformation.

Although the more progressive educational ideas developing in early childhood were at odds with the principles of state schooling, these more radical educational ideas were having an impact on policy. As Blundell (2012) highlights, in the 1918 Education Act, a holistic view of the child was presented which laid the foundations for the child-centred approach of the 1931 Hadow Report which then went on to influence the Plowden report. There continued to be dualism in the approach present in educational policy, with a focus on raising

educational achievement versus a child-centred view. The Plowden report in 1967 was significant in that it was the attempt to bring these views together (ibid.).

Policy and Change

In 1967 the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) was published. The report was significant as it was the first review of primary education since 1931 and took three years to complete. It was also significant for early years education as the report promoted the expansion of nursery education and highlighted some of the traditions that were developing in early education such as play and child – centred approaches to learning. The report gave value to play in relation to children’s learning, citing play as the central activity in nursery settings (ibid.). However, despite the recommendations of the Plowden Report it did not have the impact that was hoped for, as Richards (2001:60) states there was no ‘significant primary school revolution.’

In 1972, Margaret Thatcher, who was at the time the Secretary of State for Education, presented an Education White Paper, entitled *Education: A Framework for Expansion* (DES, 1972). Hutt and Hutt (1988) note that the White Paper section on provision for under fives, echoed the voice of the Plowden Report. The Paper aimed to increase nursery provision citing three reasons for doing so – educational, remedial and compensatory. It acknowledged that children can develop educationally particularly in language, that through nursery education special needs can be identified earlier and that nursery

education is particularly valuable for children from restricted homes. However, the White Paper 'ended up a victim of economic recession' (Brehony & Nawrotzki, 2011:243) and was neglected. Despite some key policies supporting early years education, funding into early years was slow and did not accelerate until the late 1990's. Pugh (2010) highlights how this lack of funding resulted in a 'two parallel development', during the 1960's the expansion of the voluntary sector with the playgroup movement and in the 1990's the growth of private day care.

However, early childhood education came back onto the political agenda in the 1990's, with a focus on improving educational standards but also in relation to supporting economic growth (Dahlberg et al., 1999). Pugh (2010:8) suggests one of the reasons for this could be due to the shift in attitudes to young children and whose responsibility they were, 'there was a lack of political conviction that young children mattered and a view that children were the private responsibility of their parents'. There was also the economic advantage in encouraging parents and specifically women and mothers back to work and these changes around gender roles and the role of mothers impacted on policy (Baldock et al., 2011). Due to this economic drive, the upbringing of children shifted from being the responsibility of the family to a public domain (Urban, 2008) and the belief that children are best cared for at home with their mothers changed. The changing labour market, with the economic need to have women back in the work place resulted in early years policy coming back on the agenda and an increased need for childcare. Osgood (2009) highlights that this makes early years provision significant as it provides employment to women but also provides a safe place

for women to leave their children so they can work in other sectors. There was also the growing understanding of the value of early learning, both in its own right and the belief that it could enhance subsequent academic attainment (Dahlberg et al., 1999). This shift in policy making focused on tackling poverty and social exclusion by promoting women's employment, especially lone mothers, and highlighting early years education rather than care, in order to provide children with the best start in life. However, this creates tension between the social investment of early years education on one hand and the need to promote women's employment on the other. (Lewis, 2003; Osgood, 2009; Urban, 2008). Osgood (2009) argues that early years policy with its focus on raising achievement for children and supporting economic growth, has placed the early years professional as critical to achieving these social and economic goals.

From the 1980's there was a constant focus on educational reform, and in early childhood the last 20 years has been particularly turbulent, as Nutbrown et al., (2008:16) highlight 'there have been at least 20 major new policies (an average of one a year) which apart from their individual effects have, as a whole, changed the shape and status of early childhood education almost beyond recognition'.

The 1988 Education Reform Act saw the 'most far reaching changes to the education system of England and Wales since the 1944 Education Act' (Coulby & Bash, 1991:1). The restructuring of the education system included the introduction of a National Curriculum, testing at 7,11 and 14, the development of Key Stages, with primary schools encompassing Key Stage 1 (years one and two) and Key Stage 2 (years three, four, five and six). The curriculum was

broken up into 10 subject areas with literacy, numeracy and science seen as key subjects. The inspection of schools by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) was established and responsibility shifted away from teachers and towards central government. Although the act focused on children of compulsory school age, 5 to 15, neglecting early years, it inevitably had far reaching consequences, particularly on reception classes (Roberts-Holmes, 2012). The development of a subject curriculum created a hierarchy of subjects with a focus on teaching knowledge rather than skills. This approach was the opposite of an early years philosophy focused on play and exploration (Kwon, 2002) and 'the rallying cry of the early childhood community was 'we teach children not subjects' (Wood, 2007:123). The implementation of testing, using the data for these test to compare schools and assessment data used by Ofsted to grade schools further narrowed the curriculum as teachers needed to 'teach to tests' and produce good results. The Act produced huge changes to the curriculum. Hargreaves and Evans (1997) talk of teachers feeling a sense of loss as the demands of the new curriculum squeezed out important aspects of their job. The pressure of inspection and more paperwork added to an already stressful profession. The reality of the 1988 Educational Reform Act also impacted on teachers' intellectual development, as Hargreaves and Evans highlight 'It has failed to call upon the professional wisdom of teachers; and it has dismantled and discarded much of the expertise of educational research' (1997:4). Wood (2004:361) also highlights the shift away from academic research as policy discourses created by the government sought to impose a 'command and control' model of change on education.

Early childhood education was particularly vulnerable to policy change due to the diversity of provision in early years from both the private and public sector and the range in quality of provision. As an under researched area of education that historically was based on more ideological principles which had key aspirations and ideals, meant that it was at odds with new paradigm being introduced by the government (Wood, 2004).

The lack of clarity over early years policy and concern over the ‘top down pressure’ of the National curriculum led to the establishment of The Early Childhood Education Forum in 1993 (Curtis, 1998; Pugh, 2010). The forum brought together early years professionals from all sectors with the aim to share and articulate the common principles of early years. These were:

- learning begins at birth
- care and education are inseparable – quality care is educational and quality education is caring
- every child develops at his or her own pace, but adults can stimulate and encourage learning
- all children benefit from developmentally appropriate practice and education
- skilled and careful observations are the keys to helping children learn
- cultural and physical diversity should be respected and valued: a proactive anti-bias approach should be adopted and stereotypes challenged
- learning is holistic and cannot be compartmentalised: trust, motivation, interest and enjoyment and physical and social skills are as important as purely cognitive gains
- young children learn best through play, first hand experience and talk
- carers and educators should work in partnership with parents, who are their children’s first educators
- quality care and education require well-trained educators/carers and on going training and support.

(Early Childhood Education Forum, 1997 cited in Curtis, 1998:19)

However, these principles were not echoed in the publication of the first government guidelines for early years, called the Desirable Learning Outcomes for Children (SCAA, 1996). These guidelines broke down learning into five different areas, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which resonated with the subject specific feel of the National Curriculum (Curtis, 1998; Kwon, 2002).

Early Years and the Twenty First Century

New Labour, with their electoral victory in 1997, set out to increase the development of services for young children and their families, thus marking the start of the most rapid expansion and development of early years. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown announced:

the early part of the twenty first century should be marked by the introduction of pre-school provision for the under fives and childcare available to all (Rt. Hon Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review)

As Brehony and Nawrotzki (2011) highlight, this expansion of early years was particularly impressive when considering there has been almost 60 years of virtual inactivity in this area. Prior to 1997 there had been a number of key reports on early years education. The Rumbold Report: Starting with Quality (Department for Education and Science (Rumbold/DES, 1990), made recommendations for curriculum development including planning and assessment, training, organisation and cited play as an integral part of the curriculum. This report was mainly ignored at the time by the government, but latterly went on to influence best practice in early years settings (Pugh, 2010). The Royal Society of Arts – Start Right: the Importance of Early Learning (Ball,

1994) report highlighted the importance of early years education and drew on research that demonstrated the advantages of early years education and its lasting impact on economic security. However, it recommended more longitudinal studies so that the ‘value added’ to children’s development through early years education could be recognised (Sylva et al., 2010).

The Labour government invested in, and commissioned The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research project (Sylva et al. 1999). This was the first large-scale longitudinal research project to take place in the UK to investigate the effect of early years education and care on children’s development. The research findings showed that children who had had an early years education and specifically a longer early years education (they had been in a setting under the age of three) had higher intellectual attainment and social development when they entered school. The project also highlighted that integrated centres (centres that focused on education and care) and nursery schools provided the best outcomes for children.

Results from the EPPE project were influential in shaping government early years policy, and the recognition that investment in good pre-school provision provided an effective means of reducing social exclusion (Roberts-Holmes, 2012; Siraj – Blatchford et al., 2008). It also identified the pedagogic practices being applied in the most effective settings. In summary these were:

- The staff used *open-ended questioning* and encouraged ‘*sustained share thinking*’;
- *Differentiated learning opportunities* were provided to meet the needs of individuals and groups e.g. bilingual, special needs, girls/boys etc.
- A balance was achieved between *staff supported* freely chosen play, and *staff-*

- *led* small group activities;
- Settings viewed *educational* and *social development as complementary*;
- The staff had a good understanding of appropriate pedagogical content;
- The staff supported children in being assertive while at the same time *rationalising* and *talking through* their conflicts;
- There was *strong parental involvement*, especially in terms of shared educational aims;
- A *trained teacher* acted as *manager* and a good proportion of the staff were (graduate, teacher) qualified;
- There was *strong leadership* and relatively *little staff turnover*.

(Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2008:26 *italics author's own*)

Driven by a political commitment to reduce poverty and influenced by important research projects such as the EPPE project, there was a rapid policy change (Pugh, 2010). There was also a clear political agenda to encourage women back into the work place so they could be contributing to the economy, rather than waiting to return to work when their children were of school age (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). The implementation of the National Childcare Strategy in 1998 called for free nursery places for all four year olds, Ofsted inspected provision to ensure quality and the opening of 25 Early Excellence Centres. The introduction of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) which focused on the five outcomes that are key to well being in childhood and later life – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being was then followed by the 2006 Childcare Act. These two documents focused on integrated education, health and social care, better support for parents and services provided by practitioners with high qualifications (Pugh, 2010). This led to the government continuing to develop integrated services through its Children's Centre programme. Children's Centres provide a base for multi-disciplinary teams (comprised of health visitors, midwives, teachers, speech therapists and family workers) to provide support and information for children and families.

The development of a universal early years curriculum started in 1996 with the implementation of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authorities (SCAA, 1996) Desirable Learning Outcomes (DLO's). The focus was to support transition from Reception into Key Stage One (5-7 year olds). With pressure from Ofsted and little pedagogical guidance, many teachers reverted to more direct teaching methods and less child initiated learning. Siraj – Blatchford argues that 'if pedagogic confusion is such a common response to curriculum change then in future we need to provide pedagogic guidance alongside curriculum initiatives' (1999:23). The 'poorly conceptualised' (Wood, 2007:127) DLO's were soon replaced by The Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (CGFS) (QCA/DfEE, 2000), which was an important step in establishing the status of early years in its own right (Aubrey, 2004; Baldock et al., 2011). The CGFS reflected the subject separation of the National Curriculum, breaking the CGFS was set out into six areas: communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, creative development and personal, social and emotional development. The curriculum was set out in stepping stones, leading to learning goals indicating what children should be achieving by the end of the Reception year. However, the CGFS did provide a focus on the practitioners' role, and advocated purposeful well-planned play experiences to support children's learning. These principles reflect the philosophy of early pioneers and key policy documents from the past, such as the Rumbold report (Hodson & Keating, 2007). The pedagogical differences between the Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum are highlighted in Fisher's (2009) paper, which explored the transition between Reception (Foundation Stage) to Year One. In this study, 94

Year One and Reception teachers responded to a questionnaire. Responses showed both sets of teachers being concerned by the differences between the two year groups, with particular concerns over children not having enough time to play in year one and the constraints of the literacy strategy. These results suggest two differing pedagogical approaches with the more child-centred pedagogy of the Foundation Stage in contrast to the pedagogy of the National Curriculum, which was harder to identify as it focused on progress and attainment.

The introduction of Birth to Three Matters (DfES/Sure Start, 2004) provided a curriculum for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage. This framework promoted four aspects: a strong child, a skilful communicator, a competent learner and a healthy child and positive relationships. The Foundation Stage Profile (DfES/QCA, 2003) was introduced as a statutory baseline assessment tool to track children through the Reception year and identify whether they were reaching the early learning goals. Despite the new curriculum being reasonably well received, tensions were evident. The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and The National Numeracy Strategy (DfEE, 1999) encompassed the Reception year. The focus on formal learning clashed with the play based activities of the early years curriculum. The pressure to ‘prepare’ children for Year One and for children to achieve their early learning goals also put added strain on Reception teachers. Wood (1999) cites these strains in her paper reporting on a research project that explored nine Reception teachers’ perceptions of the impact of the National Curriculum on their practice and their provision for play. Teachers used terms such as feeling ‘squashed’ and the National Curriculum ‘bearing down’ on them. Hodson and Keating (2007) report

similar findings. They conducted research in twelve different primary schools, initially exploring the responses of Reception teachers to the Foundation Stage curriculum and then revisiting 3 years later, to explore what impact the introduction of the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage had made. They too highlight the pressure on Reception teachers in their 'battle to maintain good early years practice against the downward pressure of the more formal programmes of study' (Hodson & Keating, 2007:68).

Both papers (Hodson & Keating 2007; Wood, 1999) also report findings on Reception teachers' perceptions of play. All of the teachers valued play and were maintaining it within their practice. However, pedagogical challenges were evident, as tensions between curriculum pressure and expectations clashed with traditional early years principles, as Hodson and Keating emphasise:

The value of play as a tool for learning seems to have provided teachers with the greatest challenge in linking their beliefs with the reality of the demands of the curriculum (2007:69).

It appeared that there were difficulties for teachers in being able to highlight the learning outcomes for children when they engaged in play. Wood (1999:22) also echoes a similar finding and calls for further research on the link with pedagogy and play within the early years curriculum stating, 'currently the weakness of play is that its relationship to pedagogy is not fully understood'.

The early years curriculum continued to go through rapid changes, as the CGFS and Birth to Three Matters documents were replaced with a new document. In 2008 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES, 2008) was introduced. This provided a more comprehensive framework that set out the standards for

learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old. The largest change was that this was now the statutory document for all providers working with children from birth to five including daycare, child-minders, pre schools and schools and made a key attempt to integrate education and care services alongside multi-agency working (Roberts-Holmes, 2012). The EYFS (DfES, 2008) was built around four key principles: A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Enabling Environments and Learning and Development. Each principle had different strands, with principles displayed on practice cards that were developed to guide practitioners. The curriculum was now broken down into monthly bands: birth to 11 months, 8 to 20 months, 16 to 26 months, 22 to 36 months, 30 to 50 months and 40 to 60+ months. The six areas of learning set out in the CGFS stage stayed the same.

The EYFS (DfES, 2008) highlighted the importance of positive relationships through advocating a 'Key Person' approach. All children, in whatever setting were to be assigned a 'key person' so that they could build a secure relationship with a particular adult away from their home setting. The theoretical understanding of relationships in early childhood, is based on attachment theory, drawing on the work of John Bowlby (1907-1990) who highlighted the importance of secure adult-child attachments for supporting children's psychological wellbeing (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009).

Attachment theory places emphasis on the formation of a strong parental bond, which replicated in early childhood settings has placed early childhood teachers as having to fulfill the caregiving role of the absent parent. Degotardi and Pearson (2009) argue that there is variation in caregiving roles and early years

practitioners should not just replicate a parental role. They suggest it is important to understand the qualities of professional caregiving.

Building positive relationships with a key person, creates an ‘individualistic approach’ (Dahlberg et al., 2013) to working with young children. However, in early childhood settings children make multiple attachments to adults and peers. Therefore, having a focus that is mainly on a specific adult-child relationship can mean that the complexity of the social relationships that children do make can be overlooked. Dahlberg et al. (2013) argue that if we move away from seeing settings as a place to replicate home, then the possibility of a childhood with many different relationships can be opened up, in which both home and the early childhood setting have an equally important role to play.

The response to the EYFS by practitioners was positive, with it being seen as a ‘validation of early years principles, or a return to early years approaches after a period in which pre –school was conceptualised as preparation for school’ (DfE, 2010:1). The EYFS was then reviewed in 2011, with the publication of the Tickell report (Tickell, 2011) resulting in recommendations, and the Revised EYFS (DfE, 2012) becoming statutory in September 2012. The review made some recommendations including creating three prime areas of learning: communication and language, physical development and personal social and emotional development, alongside four other specific areas of literacy, maths, expressive arts and understanding of the world. It also highlighted characteristics of effective learning, which were about how children learn, rather than what they learn. The characteristics were described as promoting dispositions such as playing and exploring, engagement and active learning, motivation, creating and

thinking critically. The EYFS then underwent further reviews in 2014 (DfE, 2014) and 2017 (DfE, 2017).

Robert-Holmes (2012) highlights how the EYFS draws upon some important early years pedagogical theories, particularly those within a socio-cultural paradigm, such as ‘sustained shared thinking’ which builds on Vygotsky’s notion of the zone of proximal development and ‘an explicit expectation that play-based experiential learning should be the dominant mode’ (Robert-Holmes, 2012:32). The EYFS principles create a construction of the child that is sociocultural, with the view of the child as a ‘competent co-constructor of knowledge through reciprocal interaction with participating children and adults within a social context’ (ibid.). This view differs to the previous ‘child centered’ view, which Dahlberg et al. (1999) argue is problematic, as it viewed the child at the centre of the world, whereas a post modernist perspective drawing on a sociocultural model, decentres children and views the child as existing through its relationships with others and within a particular context. It is important to consider how society is constructing the idea of the child and how the child is understood and conceptualised by society influences policy and practice in the field (Miller & Pound, 2011). These different constructions and government agendas can create tensions and paradigm conflicts (Wood, 2004). As early years education moved higher up the political agenda, it became shaped by the political paradigm of the time. As Moss (2014) argues, the current neoliberalist agenda places education as commodity, with a focus on quality, high returns and markets.

The current Conservative government's educational focus appears to be on returning to a more formal curriculum with the introduction of the new National Curriculum in September 2014, with a greater emphasis on learning facts. More formal tests have been introduced into the primary phase, with a phonics test in Year One and a times tables test in Year Six. In Reception classes children are now undergoing baseline assessments within the first few weeks of starting school. The assessments particularly focus on communication, literacy and mathematics and the scores from these are used as predictors to how the child will progress through school. Roberts-Holmes (2015) highlights the dangers of the narrowing of early years assessment, with an increased focus on literacy and mathematics. These new educational policies are once again highlighting a conflict between two different pedagogical approaches. This dualism is now evident in the EYFS curriculum, as although the more holistic view of the child is promoted on one hand, new initiatives such as baseline assessment and an increasing focus on school readiness create tensions and conflicting constructs within the early years curriculum. The current government's focus on the 'datafication' of early years has 'the power to challenge, disrupt and constrain early years teacher's deeply held child-centered pedagogical values' (ibid:302).

Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) argue that the current focus in education on standardization and quantification means that it is even more important that pedagogical knowledge and human values are considered. In the next section I turn to examine what is meant by pedagogy and how pedagogical beliefs develop.

Pedagogy and beliefs

The start of this section will seek to define the term pedagogy and discuss the formation of pedagogical beliefs and the influencing factors on pedagogical formation. Research and thinking on pedagogy will be reviewed, with particularly reference to studies that have addressed pedagogical beliefs in early years education.

In trying to define pedagogy, there is no straightforward definition. Mortimore (1999) highlights the term ‘the science or art of teaching’ as a common definition. However, he suggests caution at using the term ‘science’ or ‘art’ as these labels come with assumptions and suggests a more inclusive term is necessary. Other definitions include the term ‘the bigger picture of teaching’ (Alexander, 2008; Leach & Moon, 2008) which indicates that the ‘bigger picture’ is concerned with the teachers being aware of and curious about values, beliefs, theories and strategies. Alexander (2008) suggests that *teaching* happens when teachers do not have an awareness of the ‘bigger picture’ and an understanding of the relationship of education and the rest of the world. He proposes that pedagogy is multi faceted and made up of different related domains of ideas and values including – self, society, past, culture, community, curriculum and children. Atthey talks of these beliefs as ‘clusters of pedagogical notions’ (1990:24). Shermer (2012) when discussing the theory of belief formation highlights how beliefs are formed from a variety of influences. He states:

We form our beliefs for a variety of subjective, personal, emotional and psychological reasons in the context of environments created by family, friends, colleagues, culture and society at large (2012:6).

Pajares (1992), Nespor (1987) and Kagan (1992) all highlight that teachers' beliefs are an important influencing factor on classroom practice. Pajares (1992) argues that educational research needs to provide a greater focus on teacher beliefs as this will impact on teacher training. Raths (2001) provides a similar argument suggesting that a greater understanding of teacher beliefs will help to restructure teacher education programmes. He argues that it needs to be acknowledged that trainee teachers have been forming their pedagogical beliefs since being at school themselves therefore, training programmes need to acknowledge this and find ways to challenge and discuss these beliefs. Studies exploring adults memories of childhood play (Henniger, 1994; Waite, 2007) suggest play memories endure into adulthood, therefore, trainee teachers may well draw upon these memories when developing their pedagogy.

Pajares (1992) highlights that teachers' beliefs are episodic and how these episodic beliefs influence their pedagogy. He suggests that 'beliefs reside in episodic memory with material drawn from experience or cultural sources' (Nespor cited in Pajares 1992:310), and he specifically highlights childhood as a time when educational belief structure is being formed. This thinking, is also reflected by Bruner when he argues that most people have acquired a 'folk pedagogy' (1996:46). He describes this as having a notion of how a child learns and what supports their development without necessarily being able to articulate those pedagogical principles.

Bruner suggests that in order to prevent our pedagogy being tacit then it is necessary for teachers to develop *agency* by taking control of one's own mental activity, using *reflection* to make sense and understand what is learned, *collaborate* with others involved in teaching and learning and be aware of *culture* and how our reality is constructed and negotiated (1996:87). Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) echo Bruner's point. They discuss the theory of presence in teaching, which they articulate as presence as self-awareness, presence as connection to students, and presence as connection to subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. In order for teachers to understand presence in teaching they need a critical self-awareness.

Developing pedagogy and pedagogical reflection

Simon (1981) and more recently Alexander (2008) too, have questioned the neglect and underdevelopment of pedagogy in primary education in England. Research in early years education that has focused on pedagogy suggests that there is a lack of engagement with pedagogy, with practitioners struggling to articulate their beliefs (Moyle et al., 2002, 2002a; Stephen, 2010). Siraj-Blatchford (1999) states that it is not uncommon to find early years practitioners 'recoiling' at the term pedagogy, as it is associated with teaching and therefore does not sit comfortably with the conflict of care and education in the early years sector. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) suggest that early years policy has become 'snared in a care/education dualism' (2005:90) which precludes the concept of pedagogy.

In order to support the argument that there is a lack of engagement with pedagogy in early years teachers, Stephen (2010) draws on two research studies in early years education. The first study focused on adults supporting children's learning with technology in an early years setting and involved fourteen different practitioners over the course of a year. The research employed a plan-act-review cycle of guided inquiry, which involved the participants being observed and videoed and reflecting on their practice. The second study explored the introduction of 'active learning' in the first year of primary school in Scotland, which children enter from the ages of 4-5. Five data sources were used: interviews with teachers, interviews with school managers and local authority representatives, interviews with parents, conversations with children and observations. In the first study, although focusing on the practitioners introducing and supporting the children in learning new technology, what became evident was a difficulty amongst the participants in being able to articulate their own pedagogic approach. What was observed was, that rather than being able to explain why they did something, the practitioners' responses were more along the lines of it is 'just something we do'. In the second study, when discussing the changes made to the curriculum and how 'active learning' was introduced, the teachers discussed the changes to the structure and organisation of activities, rather than how they were interacting with the children and there was no reference to the research or theory underpinning the purpose of the new curriculum. Stephen (2010) suggests that the practitioners in these studies had an apparent hesitation in 'engaging with discussion of pedagogy, their own practices and the understandings that underpin their actions' (2010:26).

These findings are echoed in The Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning (SPEEL) Project (Moyles et al., 2002). This was an ethnographic study commissioned by the DfES with the purpose to explore the characteristics of effective pedagogy in early years practice. They defined pedagogy as:

both the behaviour of teaching and being able to talk about and reflect on teaching. Pedagogy encompasses both what practitioners actually DO and THINK and the principles, theories, perceptions and challenges that inform and shape it. It connects the relatively self-contained act of teaching and being an early years educator, with personal, cultural and community values (including care), curriculum structures and external influences. Pedagogy in the early years operates from a shared frame of reference (a mutual learning encounter) between the practitioner, the young child and his/her family. (2002:5)

The project worked with 27 different early years settings over a year, and included a range of data gathering methods including interviews with 27 head teachers/managers and 18 practitioners, parent questionnaires, documentary analysis of the documentation available in each setting and video-stimulated reflective dialogue sessions with 35 practitioners. Particular attention was given to the practitioners' role and their ability to reflect upon and interrogate their own practice. When looking back at video observations, it is reported that the participants struggled to identify their own behaviour, finding it much easier to talk about the child, which is similar to the findings in Stephen's (2010) study.

In a further article based on the reflective dialogue interviews undertaken in the SPEEL project, Moyles et al., (2002a) report that the participants could articulate the 'what' and 'how' they were doing when, but not the 'why' (2002a:467).

What was proving a challenge for the participants was making the links between their beliefs, reflections, knowledge and thinking, and how this connected with their practice (ibid). However, the researchers found that the process of reflection

was a useful tool in beginning to support practitioners in articulating their pedagogy and findings from the SPEEL project suggest that through reflective dialogue the pedagogical layers were ‘unpeeled’ and deeper reflection emerged. Using tools of reflection and collaboration to develop pedagogical awareness echoes Bruner’s theory (1996) as discussed earlier. He suggests that ideas and notions can be changed through metacognition, the process of thinking about thinking. Moyles et al., (2002) also pick up on the need for metacognition and state that:

Just as we now expect children to be engaged in the metacognitive process exemplified in Bruner’s work, this must apply equally to the practitioners if they are to further hone and develop their professional skills (2002:3).

Using the process of reflection to support pedagogical awareness has been articulated in other research (Birmingham, 2012; Rodgers & Raider-Roth 2006; Schon, 1983). Birmingham (2012) argues that in order to understand the contemporary work on reflection in teaching, then the ancient conception of virtue, conceptualised by Aristotle and called *phronesis*, needs to present in the concept of reflection. To have *phronesis* is to be practically wise or of good judgement (Willis, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2004). *Phronesis* is important as it concerns values and goes beyond analytical, scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and technical knowledge. Willis describes *phronesis* as ‘the type of knowledge needed to make good decisions in a given context’ (2008:128). The context is very important and must be taken into consideration. If this is not the case then one falls back on a technical approach. In an educational context, for example, if a teacher was teaching all the children in the same way, technically the teacher would be teaching, but they would not be taking into consideration each child’s needs.

Pedagogy is concerned with what teachers think, and what they do. Some of that will be technical and there are certain skills one needs to develop in order to teach. At other times, reflection and intuition are necessary and it is at these times where practical wisdom can come into play. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) also highlight the importance of reflection and intuition in teaching and use the term 'presence'. They define this as an, 'alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness' (2006:265).

Andrew (2015) argues that education has focused too much on episteme and technical knowledge and neglected phronesis. In an early years context, Andrew suggests one of the reasons that phronesis has been neglected is due to dualism of care and education. From a childcare view, technical and more practical skills have been focussed on and from a school setting, episteme knowledge, such as an understanding of child development has been favoured. As the early years system has shifted to encompass both care and education, an understanding of practical wisdom is even more important.

Andrew acknowledges that practical wisdom has its complexities:

This practical wisdom is often difficult to articulate, because it works on a fuzzy logic, which takes into account situation, context, the varying needs of a shifting constellation of bodies and objects and the emotions that circulate within these settings (2015:352).

However, through reflection and the active engagement with others, phronesis allows teachers to 'learn how and when to trust certain feelings, and they develop habits of attitude and feeling that enable them to reliably make good judgments without being aware of following procedure' (Zagzebski cited in Birmingham,

2012:321). Birmingham (2012) suggests that reflection is essentially moral and that phronesis is a moral virtue. This would echo Andrew's stance that utilising practical wisdom requires 'ethical and embodied engagement' (2015:352). These attitudes are virtues of character and it is phronesis that enables a person to use these within a given context (Birmingham, 2012). In order to draw upon these virtues of character one would need knowledge of the self.

The self

Turner-Bisset (1999) suggests that knowledge of the self is an important factor in the ability to reflect. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) argue that developing critical self-awareness is an on-going process that teachers need to engage with. This concurs with Nias' (1989) research with primary school teachers. In *Primary Teachers Talking*, results of a longitudinal study are presented. The research involved interviewing and talking to 99 teachers initially between 1975 – 1977 then revisiting 50 of the participants ten years later. Nias emphasises the personal aspect of teaching, stating 'teaching is a personal activity because the manner in which each teacher behaves is unique' (1989:13). Her research exposes some of the pitfalls of being in a career that demands so much of the self. Many teachers state that their job is 'a calling' or 'vocation' and due to this the boundaries between personal and professional life can blur. Nias (1989) makes an important point, that teaching can satisfy the need for non-work interests and pursuits. For example, teachers can become involved in sport, music or art. The close personal relationships that are developed between pupils, parents and colleagues offer personal and emotional satisfaction.

More recent research is also focusing on the teacher as a person. Research on teacher effectiveness has shown that ‘teachers matter’ (Day et al., 2007:1) and that they influence school and pupil progress and make a positive impact on society, however this was not always the case. Goodson (1992) charts the development of researching teachers. In the 1960’s teachers were ‘shadowy figures on the educational landscape’ (Goodson, 1992:3) mainly appearing as statistics. The shift in the 1970’s saw education as a ‘social process’ (ibid.). By the 1980’s Goodson was calling for change:

Researchers, even when they stopped treating the teacher as numerical aggregate, historical footnote or unproblematic role incumbent still treated teachers as interchangeable types unchanged by circumstance and time (ibid:4).

It is perhaps not surprising then that a greater focus on teachers developed. Research now has acknowledged that teachers’ personal lives are closely linked to their professional lives (Day et al., 2007). As Hargreaves states:

The ways they teach are also rooted in their backgrounds, their biographies, and so in the kinds of teachers they have become. Their careers – their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustrations of these things – are also important for teachers’ commitment, enthusiasm and morale (Hargreaves cited in Day et al 2007:26).

In continuing to explore the importance of self and its impact on pedagogical beliefs, I now turn to look at specific aspects of identity.

Exploring aspects of identity – gender and social class

A gender analysis of teaching must strive to depict how women who are teachers experience our femininity in schools and how our sense of gender, in turn, influences our pedagogy and the curriculum of the classroom (Grumet 1988:46).

Female early years teachers are the focus of this study, therefore, this section examines the position of women as early years teachers from a gendered perspective. Through exploring the gendered structure of the profession and the conceptualisation of teaching as feminised (Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2009), the gendered beliefs that have been established within the profession will be examined, and how these may have influenced the professional identity of women teachers will be considered. In reflecting on gender relations within teaching, class relations will also be considered. Arnot (2002) argues that both class and gender are intertwined and that it is theoretically difficult to separate them. This position concurs with Reay's (1997) argument that although the relationship between class and gender is complex the two need to be conceptualised together.

Gaskell and Mullen (2006) argue that teaching has been organised and framed by gender. Although often considered a female profession, the gender gap in teaching is not as obvious as some other professions, such as nursing or engineering. However, there are striking differences in the way that men and women are represented, paid and promoted (ibid:458) in education. Women are more likely to teach younger children, whereas men tend to dominate secondary and further education. Men also hold more positions of power across the sector (Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). Recent statistics show clearly the gender imbalance in parts of education and the unequal distribution of men and women. This is particularly evident within early years education, which is a predominately female profession. According to the DFE report (2010) on the profile of teachers in England, 195,400 female teachers and 28,600 male teachers

worked in maintained primary and nursery schools and in just maintained nursery schools, 1,600 teachers were female and 100 teachers were male.

Women and teaching was of significant interest to second wave feminist educationalists (Acker, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Skelton, Francis & Smulyn, 2009; Skelton & Francis, 2009 and Smulyn, 2004) and this led to a greater awareness and understanding of how gender shapes women teachers' identities (Skelton & Francis, 2009). In order to consider how the teaching profession has been organised and shaped by gender, it is beneficial to look from a historical perspective and examine how the development of teaching as a profession has shaped the current context and society's perceptions of women teachers. This section starts with the consideration of the concept of teacher as mother.

Teachers as Mothers

Early childhood education and care has been shaped by discourses of maternalism (Ailwood, 2008; Osgood, 2012). Smedley (1994) suggests that the concept of teacher as mother is a powerful metaphor that warrants consideration, as it is significant to the way teachers are constructed and how they see and describe their work. Starting with the concept of teaching as mothering is particularly relevant for a study focusing on early years teachers as there are persistent maternal analogies in the accounts and ideas of teaching young children (Acker, 1995; Hauver-James, 2010). The early educational theorists, such as Comenius, Pestalozzi and Froebel, did not promote women as teachers, but some discussed the influence of mothers and Acker (1995) suggests that the maternal legacy connected to teaching young children has 'deep historical roots' (1995:23). Early educational theorist such as Comenius and Pestalozzi wrote

about the importance of the mother. Liebschner explains that Comenius' concept of mother as a conscientious teacher, was changed by Pestalozzi to the concept of a mother who loves and cares for children without reservation, and who intuitively knows what is right for them (Liebschner, 1992). It was Froebel who used the phrase 'mother made conscious' and he 'used naturalistic observation of mothers interacting with their children to delineate maternal practice as the foundation for a new educational order' (Steedman, 1985:152). The maternal practice that Froebel observed shaped the training that Froebel developed for young women, helping to connect discourses of motherhood with teaching (Ailwood, 2008).

Historically there has been a link between care and education in early years. With women traditionally undertaking this work, the early years profession has been constructed as caring and maternal (McGillivray, 2008; Thomson & Kehily, 2011). This persistent link with teaching and mothering (Huaver-James, 2010; Skelton & Francis, 2009) has connected the profession to the domestic and emotional work of child rearing, which contributes to the low status of working with young children. It has also been suggested that the structure of schools has helped to contribute to the maternal imagery of teaching (Delamont cited in Francis & Skelton, 2009:126). Some schools in England are set up like families and children are with the same teacher for the whole year in order to create strong relationships. Grumet (1988) suggests the classroom replicates the isolation of domesticity; as the teacher is often on her own with the children for long periods of time, the classroom becomes similar to the seclusion of the kitchen. In relation to early years, the Kindergarten was specifically set up to replicate the home, with children under 'motherly direction' in a setting with a

garden and pets (Brehony, 2000). Due to this persistent maternal analogy, certain words have become associated with describing and are often used by women to describe their approach. Acker (1995) particularly highlights the notion of 'caring', linking its association with teaching and domestic life. She argues that this term has been constructed through the 'reproduction of social and sexual divisions in the family and labour market within capitalist society' (1995:22).

The development in the understanding of attachment theory, drawing on the work of John Bowlby who highlighted the importance of secure adult-child attachments for supporting children's psychological wellbeing has also helped to position early years professionals in a maternal role (Degotardi & Pearson, 2009). Attachment theory places emphasis on the formation of a strong parental bond, which replicated in early childhood settings has placed early childhood teachers as having to fulfill the caregiving role of the absent parent (ibid.). The theoretical understand of relationships in early childhood, based on attachment theory, has been an influential theory, which has shaped aspects of the curriculum. The EYFS (DfES, 2008) highlighted the importance of positive relationships through advocating a 'Key Person' approach. All children, in whatever setting were to be assigned a 'key person' so that they could build a secure relationship with a particular adult away from their home setting.

Degotardi and Pearson (2009) suggest that there are limitations to seeing relationships from just a parental perspective. They argue that there is variation in caregiving roles and early years practitioners should not just replicate a parental role. They suggest it is important to understand the qualities of professional caregiving.

Dahlberg et al. (2013) also raise concerns arguing that, building positive relationships with a key person, creates an 'individualistic approach' (2013:68) to working with young children. In early childhood settings children can make multiple attachments to adults and peers. Therefore, having a focus that is mainly on a specific adult-child relationship can mean that the complexity of the social relationships that children do make can be overlooked. Dahlberg et al. (2013) argue that if we move away from seeing settings as a place to replicate home, then the possibility of a childhood with many different relationships can be opened up, in which both home and the early childhood setting have an equally important role to play.

Taggart (2011) suggests that early years teaching suffers from the historical perception that caring is 'simply the natural fulfillment of maternal concern' (2011:93) for children. Many early years professionals discuss caring as an indication of their professionalism (Osgood, 2010). Taggart argues that the early years profession has a 'legitimate aspiration to be a caring profession' (ibid:85), however it needs to be defined by an ethics of care and a moral purpose. Harwood et al. (2013), Osgood (2010) and Taggart (2011) argue that there is a need for early years professionals to have a greater understanding of their role and professionalism. By challenging the notion of professionalism, and developing alternative professional identities, then early years educators could develop a better understanding of their emotional and caring work. The traditional connection between caring and mothering is outdated and there is a need to go 'beyond caring' (Taggart, 2011). Osgood's (2010) research has shown that the language of care used by early years professionals shows a 'counter-discourse' and evidence of a 'critically reflective emotional

professional'. Seeing caregiving as a key element of professional work (Taggart, 2011) and one that is appropriate for men and women (Noddings, 2003) is an important step in re thinking work with young children.

Teaching and social class

The maternal image that has been historically endorsed in teaching is of a particular mother. Steedman (1985) suggests that this ideal image of mothering comes from two historical sources; the middle class mother in the domestic schoolroom of the nineteenth century and the naturalistic observation of peasant mothers displaying natural maternal behaviours. Both Froebel and Pestalozzi observed mothers 'in the cottages of the lower classes' (ibid:153) witnessing natural, instinctive behaviours and saw the emotional empathy with the child that was displayed by the mother as a principle that could be applied to teachers and nurses. Froebel advocated the importance of the relationship between mother and child and the positive impact this relationship had on the child's development (Hoskins & Smedley, 2016). His kindergarten pedagogy highlighted the significance of the first six years of life and it was middle class women who began to share Froebel's ideas. Froebel's ideas were radical for the time and he sought with the establishment of the kindergarten to create 'a public setting imbued with the maternal love found in the private domestic world' (Read, 2003:20).

Read (2003) and Brehony (2000) highlight how middle class Froebelian women developed a network across Europe and influenced the development of teaching as a professional status, and provided middle class women with the opportunity to create a new profession - the early years teacher. It is interesting to note that

this was not what Froebel, himself had intended for the role of the women in his kindergarten. As Read (2003) clearly highlights he did not advocate academic training or a professional role for women, Kindergarten training was preparation for motherhood. The development of the various networks and schools based on Froebel's pedagogy grew in England from the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. These networks included the Froebel Society, established in 1874, whose key aim was to establish a professional identity for kindergarten teachers with recognised courses and training. Read (2011) argues that the Froebel Society had a significant impact on developing infant teachers' professional knowledge, however, government policy remained ambivalent. The Froebelian movement demonstrates an area where middle class women had some contribution to the development of education in a patriarchal system, and their ability to break down the domestic barriers that constrained them was remarkable (Brehony, 2000). Read (2011) cites this particular time in educational history as a positive outcome for female agency. Middle-class women were able to be involved in an important educational movement and gained professional training and employment (Brehony, 2000).

In William's (1990) paper on the recruitment of women into teaching in the nineteenth century and their social class, the divide between the working class and middle class, men and women, adult and child, with regard to access to school and education is highlighted. In a class-ridden system, attitudes were divided. Some felt everyone had the right to education and others felt 'the poor should remain in the condition in which God placed them' (Williams, 1990:30). As the government invested money into public education over the course of the century, the need to train teachers developed. The system of pupil-teachers had

developed, that allowed able pupils to become apprentices to an elementary school head teacher. This system also allowed them to gain a secondary education at a pupil-teacher centre. This meant that clever working class and lower middle class women were able to train to teach (Hilton & Hirsch, 2000). However, as teaching developed into a profession, and paid employment became more acceptable to middle class women, teacher-training colleges developed. In order to attract women from middle class homes to attend teacher-training college, the colleges 'projected a genteel ethos' (ibid.11) and teaching became established as a 'suitable and desirable occupation for an educated young lady' (Hoskins & Smedley, 2016:212).

Williams (1990) charts the recruitment of women into Whitelands College, established in 1841 as the first teacher training college for women, from the mid to the end of the nineteenth century, looking specifically at their class background. Evidence shows that the college strove to recruit 'respectable' women and that women from working class backgrounds had greater difficulty in securing a place. Although women from more disadvantaged backgrounds gained places to train, some were originally from middle class families that had fallen on hard times, or were orphaned. Williams shows that Whitelands became a well-established and respected college that attracted women from middle class backgrounds. Men were dominating universities, and teacher-training college became the only way for women to continue their education and it became more acceptable for middle class single women to move into professions such as teaching and nursing. These professions were seen as an extension of a woman's domestic role at home. As Smedley (1994) highlights, the decision for young middle class women at this time to go into teaching was both 'constraining and

liberating' (1994:36). It meant a personal income and independence but also restrictions. If women married their careers would end.

As the profession became feminised then expectations about the personal characteristics of a teacher were set. These established gendered discourses have led women who teach to be described in certain ways (Smulyan, 2004). The strong historical connection between teaching and mothering helped to establish a set of characteristics that a female teacher would need, such as being caring, organised, nurturing (Skelton & Francis, 2009; Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). As Smedley highlights, 'women as teachers of young children, are positioned as passive, unintelligent and accommodating' (1994:45). These characteristics ignored intellectual capabilities and this has meant that teaching has often been viewed as a low status profession (Hauver-James, 2010). With the expansion of teaching and women beginning to dominate the profession, coupled with established ideas about women's nurturing and caring attributes, women were dominating teaching in the early years (Skelton & Francis, 2009).

Maguire (2005) discusses gender and class in her paper, which uses in depth interviews with five working class women teachers to discuss how class perspectives shift and change. She suggests that the feminisation of the profession has contributed to its downward shift in status and that although teaching is now a postgraduate profession it does not accord the same status as other professions with similar training. Men continue to dominate the higher up the educational ladder, with more men in management positions (Coffey & Delamont, 2000). This is perhaps something to do with the status of academic subjects that has helped to continue this divide. The older the child gets the more

emphasis there is on teaching academic subjects, however in the early years there is a larger emphasis on play and social development (Francis & Skelton, 2009). This more holistic approach can suggest a greater emphasis on care, which resonates with domestic, maternal images rather than a more academic view (Hauver-James, 2010). This can construct women who teach young children as having a lower status and as minders rather than professionals (McGillivray, 2008).

Certain policy initiatives, concerned with the development of qualifications in the early years have not helped to raise the status of early years teaching. The rapid expansion of early years provision, also highlighted the need for appropriately qualified staff. In 1993, the conservative government controversially proposed that mothers who were non-graduates could undertake a one year course to qualify as nursery and infant teachers, thus forgoing the usual degree requirements (Faulkner & Coates, 2013). Due to much opposition this initiative was dropped. However, the recent development of the new professional role of Early Years Teacher Status, which has been developed to ensure that graduates are working in all early years settings, has, it can be argued, created more confusion about the professional status of early years professionals. Whilst, called ‘teachers’ Early Years Teacher status does not come with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and therefore does not bring the same pay and conditions as QTS (Barron, 2016).

Qualifications like Early Years Teacher Status show a change in who delivers training, with universities taking more of a back seat and more training being done in schools in conjunction with Higher Education Institutions (Faulkner &

Coates, 2013). There has also been a rapid change in teacher training, with the introduction of different training routes and the development of school based training opportunities which has meant that teacher education shifted away from universities (Furlong et al., 2000). Whitty (2000) suggests that the move to take teacher training away from universities and into schools, could be seen by some as 'de-professionalising' teaching. The wider range of teacher training options developing and more school based training available has meant that a wider range of people are now able to access teacher training. The development of Foundation degrees in Early Years has meant that nursery nurses, teaching assistants and other practitioners now have more options for career progression with the option of working and studying part time (Faulkner & Coates, 2013).

Summary

This review of literature helps bring together knowledge and understanding of how pedagogical beliefs in early years teachers are formed and what influences the formation of those beliefs.

The first section gave particular attention to the development of early years education in England. A historical perspective highlighted the development of early years education and some of the key pioneers who influenced its establishment, for example pioneers such as Froebel and McMillan influenced the development of nursery schools and early years teachers (Blundell, 2012). Key pedagogical traditions developed and continue to impact on current early years practice. Principles of the early years curriculum today, such as purposeful play, reflect the philosophy of early pioneers and key policy documents from the past (Hodson & Keating, 2007).

Historically, early years pedagogy was at odds with the schooling methods of the time. Early educational pioneers such as Robert Owen rejected the formal educational systems of the time and advocated that young children should be active and play (Read, 2006; Stewart & McCann, 1967). These pedagogical tensions have persisted and there continue to be conflicts between the early years curriculum today, which focuses on play and exploration and the subject specific National Curriculum (Wood, 2007).

Examining the political landscape of early years education highlighted the initially slow development of early years policy during the twentieth century with the sudden rapid expansion during the 1990's (Brehony & Nawrotzki, 2011). The hasty political focus on early years education had an economic drive, which shifted the child from the family into the public domain (Urban 2008). With a focus on social investment and an economic drive to promote women's employment a tension has been created within early years policy (Lewis, 2003; Osgood, 2009; Urban 2008).

These issues are particularly important to this study as gaining a greater understanding of the historical and political landscape of early years education in England, will help to highlight how historical and political contexts impact on the development of teachers pedagogical beliefs.

The second section of this chapter highlighted the difficulty of defining the concept of pedagogy and touched on the complex ways in which pedagogical beliefs are formed (Alexander, 2008; Leach & Moon, 2008). Alexander (2008) highlights the wide range of influences on pedagogical belief formation and that ideas and values will form and develop over time. There is an acknowledgment

that teachers' beliefs play an important part in classroom practice (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992) but in order to have a greater understanding of their own pedagogical beliefs and how they are formed, teachers need the opportunity to talk and reflect (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Research has also indicated the need for early years teachers to engage in reflection and gain a greater understanding of their pedagogical beliefs (Moyle et al., 2002; 2002a; Stephen, 2010). Andrew (2015) argues that in early years education there is a need to engage in reflection to support pedagogical awareness. He suggests that due to the dualism of care and education, there has been too much of a focus on technical knowledge and more practical skills and that a focus on practical wisdom would support practitioners in becoming more reflective.

What was also of significance was the important part that the teacher as a person plays in pedagogical development and the link between their personal and professional self (Nias, 1989). A greater understanding of teachers' backgrounds and biographies is important in order to gain a great appreciation of who they are as people (Day et al., 2007). There are few studies that have specifically examined the life histories of early years teachers, with an aim to shed light on how pedagogical beliefs develop. This study will begin to fill this gap and provide an insight into how pedagogical beliefs develop and change over time.

In order to explore the importance of self and its impact on pedagogical beliefs, the final section in this chapter explored specific aspects of identity.

This section explored the gendered structure of the teaching profession and the conceptualisation of teaching as being feminised (Coffey & Delamont, 2000). By considering how early years teaching has been organised and shaped by gender,

highlighted how the profession had developed and the perceptions of female teachers had been constructed. The strong link between early years teaching and mothering (Acker, 1995; Hauver-James, 2010; Skelton & Francis, 2009) has connected the profession to domestic and emotional work. This maternal image has associated early years teachers with certain characteristics such as caring and nurturing (Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). However, more recent research suggests that there is a need to re think teachers 'caring' role and to see it as an important part of teachers' professionalism (Hardwood et al., 2013; Osgood, 2010; Taggart, 2011).

In order to continue to develop the landscape for this study, I now present the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER THREE:

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical framework that underpins this study; firstly I discuss how and why I developed this conceptual focus, before moving on to examine the main theories being utilised.

Within my conceptual framework, I draw upon a feminist social constructionist perspective and particularly the work of key educationalist feminists (Acker, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Skelton, Francis & Smulyn, 2009; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Smulyn, 2004) and their theorisation of gender as socially constructed. The work of these writers is especially useful to my analysis as it allows me to understand how early years teaching has been organised and framed by the concept of gender as socially constructed and how the feminisation of teaching may have influenced how my participants have formed their pedagogical beliefs.

I also draw upon the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and particularly his theoretical tools of habitus and institutional habitus (Thomas, 2002) in order to gain a greater understanding of how the social world and early childhood has influenced the formation of my participants' pedagogical beliefs. Habitus places emphasis on the individual's enduring dispositions, attitudes and tastes and the influence of wider societal cultural values and norms on the formation of these characteristics. Habitus is especially useful to my analysis as it allows me to

think through and understand the various factors that influence pedagogical formation, with a particular emphasis on how social relations become constituted within the self (Lawler, 2004).

I will discuss each of these theoretical tools in detail in this chapter and will also at the end of the chapter, highlight some of the limitations of these concepts. Firstly, I will explain how I developed this theoretical framework.

Developing a theoretical framework

Letherby (2003) suggests that we are all theorists, as we think, analyse, interpret and reflect in order to make sense of our lives. In order to deepen my understanding of the story that the data were telling (Atkinson, 1998) it was necessary to find a conceptual lens that would give greater meaning and depth to the process of analysis and my understanding of how female early years teachers form their pedagogical beliefs.

The conceptual tools that I wanted to employ needed to support and deepen my understanding of the influence of certain aspects of identity (specifically gender and class), the influence of childhood and schooling, institutional influences and wider societal, cultural and political influences on pedagogical formation.

Feminist theoretical approaches to gender

As this study progressed I developed a greater understanding of women as teachers and how they have been positioned in society and within the teaching profession as a whole. As Skelton, Francis and Smulyan (2009) reiterate there is a diversity and range within a feminist perspective, thus it has been important to look specifically at the theories and ideas that are most pertinent to this study. Skelton and Francis (2009) acknowledge the role of second wave feminist educationalists such as Grumet (1988) and Acker (1989; 1994) in the contribution to our understanding and knowledge of teacher gender today. Therefore, it is these feminist educationalists along with more recent work from Francis, Skelton and Smulyan (2009) and Francis and Skelton (2009) that have particularly influenced the development of this theoretical framework. Francis, Skelton and Smulyan (2009) contend that gender is the core concern of the various strands of feminist theory.

Significant to this study was the focus on gender and approaching teaching as being organised and framed by gender as a social construction (Skelton & Francis, 2009). My literature review identified how being a woman may influence female teacher's pedagogical beliefs, particularly through the 'feminisation' of teaching (Grumet 1988; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Skelton, Francis & Smulyan, 2009) and in relation to early years teachers this could for example, lead to enacting caring and mothering roles (Hauver-James, 2010; Smedley, 1994; Steedman, 1985). Educational feminists acknowledge the relevance of gender analysis in relation to teaching and in connection with

exploring pedagogical formation and professional identity (McGillvray, 2008; Pinnegar et al., 2005; Thomson & Kehily, 2011). Therefore, this study is framed within a social constructionist perspective, which rather than seeing gendered behaviour as natural, sees it as being constructed socially through interaction with others (Burr, 2003). A feminist social constructionist perspective has provided a tool within which to explore the impact of gender and the feminisation of teaching on the development of the participants' pedagogical beliefs.

Gender as socially constructed

Francis (2009) argues that gender is a complex term with differing interpretations amongst theorists. Many see explanations for gendered behaviour as natural biological differences between men and women, whilst others view difference as socially constructed (Scharff, 2013; Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). It is the latter view that influences this study. Viewing gender as a social construct, acknowledges that the meanings that individuals make are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural understanding (Burr, 2003; Creswell, 2007). Skelton and Francis (2009:19) suggest that it is particularly interesting to explore the active role that people play in constructing their gender identities and that such constructions can be influenced by educational environments.

Burr (2003:2) urges a 'critical stance toward taken-for-granted' knowledge and that the categories that we use to make sense of the world are constructed. This

stance helps to challenge assumptions that may be held, for example in relation to this study, it may be assumed within the educational profession that in order to teach young children you must be motherly. Burr (ibid:3) also suggests that 'historical and cultural specificity' must be considered when making sense of the world, and that ways of understanding are specific to a certain time and culture. Therefore, when considering the life histories of my participants' stories, they need to be culturally and historically located in order to understand them. Burr also highlights that 'knowledge is sustained by social processes' (ibid:4) and that our understanding of the world is constructed between us through daily interaction. Burr (ibid) argues that all social interaction is relevant to the social constructions and language is particularly important. Therefore, utilising the method of life history interviewing for data collection lends itself to a social constructionist perspective as the participants have the opportunity to think and reflect on their lives and tell their stories in their own words. Finally, Burr (ibid:5) states that 'knowledge and social action go together' and that constructions of the world support certain patterns of social action and reject others. This highlights how our construction of the world is intertwined with power relations and creates the opportunity for people to be treated differently (Scharff, 2013). In the field of early years education, the construction of the early years teacher is often associated with maternal characteristics and the assumption that due to women's 'natural desire' to have children they are best placed to teach young children (Hauver-James, 2010). Through applying a social constructionist approach my aim was to gain a greater understanding of how the role of gender has particularly shaped aspects of this group of female early years

teachers' identities and how this may have influenced the formation of their pedagogical beliefs.

Feminine and Masculine

Following the sex identification of boy or girl, the word 'gender' is used to describe the resulting behaviours connected to that identification, and this is driven by social and cultural assumptions rather than biology (Francis, 2009; Paechter, 1998; Thornton & Bricheno, 2006). Therefore, rather than using biological terms such as male and female, the gendered terms of masculine and feminine have become more common. Through the construction of gender, and particularly within the stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity certain attributes have been assigned to men and women and these can be reinforced through cultural and social context and life experiences (Scharff, 2013). Gendered socialisation and gender stereotypical ideas start from childhood, with children often receiving different and gendered toys and clothes. Girls are often described as sweet and pretty, whereas boys are handsome and strong. Women are deemed as more caring and better communicators, whereas men are considered to be more competitive and aggressive (Paechter, 2009; Renold 2009).

These masculine or feminine gendered behaviours have been associated with certain professions and this is evident in teaching (Gaskell & Mullen, 2009; McGillvary, 2008) as teaching can be seen as a feminised profession (Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2009; Hauver-James, 2010). By framing

teaching with ideas of femininity certain assumptions have been created, such as women being more suited to teaching younger children. At the same time a strong relationship between teaching and motherhood has developed (Skelton & Francis, 2009; Smedley, 1994; Steedman, 1985; Thomson & Kehily, 2011). These scholars have emphasised that through using a feminist perspective the gendered nature of women's teaching can be explored and characteristics such as being maternal and caring, which have been particularly associated with women who teach young children can be highlighted. This has led to women teachers being linked to social rather than intellectual tasks and has created a hierarchy within the profession with women more likely to teach younger children and men more associated with positions of authority and teaching within secondary or higher education (Taggart, 2011).

Femininities

More recently there has been an acknowledgement that there is diversity within the terms feminine and masculine (Lawler, 2014) and 'the impact of multiple factors of identity on the socially constructed self' (Francis, 2009:12) has led to the use of plural terms – 'masculinities' and 'femininities'. As Thornton and Bricheno (2006:20) highlight there is a continuum of masculinities and femininities at the extremes of which lie hegemonic masculinity and stereotypical femininity.

Walkerdine and Ringrose (2009) emphasise the important shift in feminist research, in looking beyond one femininity that was particularly based on a

western, white, heterosexual, middle class model, to looking more specifically at women's individual experiences and particularly how ethnicity and class intersect with gender and ethnicity.

Although there are the traditional constructs of gender, there is not just one version of femininity. There has been much research done in schools to look at how girls construct themselves and each other in educational settings and the multiple femininities that are played out (Paechter, 2009; Renold, 2009). In Reay's (2001) research looking at femininities in the primary classroom she discovered that the children were actively involved in constructing gender identities. A range of femininities were constructed by the children – 'spice girls', 'nice girls', 'girlies' and 'tomboys', although as Reay asserts the masculinities and femininities available to the children were constrained and class, ethnicity and emerging sexualities also played a part. As Skeggs emphasises, for women, 'being, becoming, practising and doing femininity are very different things for women of different classes, races, ages and nations' (2011:98). Within these range of femininities, certain images of femininity have come to be seen as more desirable, with white middle and upper class women embodying this ideal (ibid.). The idea of treating women as a homogenous group excluded many women who did not embody the western, white, middle class, heterosexual model (Walkerdine & Ringrose, 2009). Paechter (2009) highlights that within gender discussions there are often dichotomous and oppositional constructions prevalent in schools and in wider society (2009:368) for example, nice/naughty, silly/sensible, sporty/non-sporty. Paechter (2009) discusses how certain constructs become predominant, such as 'niceness', and that this has

become a preparation for middle class girls to achieve social and educational success, with Walkerdine et al., (cited in Praechter 2009) arguing that this originates from middle class mothering practices. The characteristics of middle class mothering practices have been influential in the construction of the image of the female teacher (Osgood, 2012; Steedman, 1985). Therefore, it is important to explore how the participants in my study might have been influenced by these constructions and how they have impacted on their pedagogical beliefs. Through a social constructionist approach to gender I aimed to uncover the types of femininities that the participants of this study embody and how these influenced their pedagogy.

This discussion highlights the complexity connected to gender and is in no way a full representation of all feminist perspectives, but rather aspects of feminist theory that are pertinent to this study. It emphasises that there are multiple femininities available to women, that women cannot be seen as a homogenous group and that within gender constructs background plays an important part, leading to some women being positioned as more powerful than others. The application of feminist social constructionist theory will allow for a more thoughtful interpretation of the participants' stories and will enable me to better understand the possible femininities they have encountered and embodied, how their background and experience has influenced the construction of those femininities, and how being in a feminised career impacts on their pedagogical beliefs. In order to gain a greater insight into social class and wider social structures, I now turn to Bourdieu and the theoretical tools of habitus and institutional habitus.

Habitus

As well as developing an understanding of how my participants' pedagogical beliefs may have been framed and influenced by gender, I also needed to develop a greater understanding of how wider societal, cultural and political influences may have impacted on the participants' pedagogical formation. Therefore, in order to examine how society has influenced the female participants in this study, I drew on Bourdieu's notions of habitus (1977; 1990) and institutional habitus (Reay et al., 2001; 2009; Thomas, 2002). Webb et al. (2002:1) suggest that Bourdieu's concept of habitus makes a significant and successful attempt at making sense of the relationship between the objective social structures (for example institutions and fields) and everyday practices (what people do and why they do it). Habitus can be used to uncover how certain aspects of identity, such as class, race and gender are embodied and enacted in individual actions and attitudes (Reay, 2004:437). Reay (2004) also highlights the importance of individual histories in understanding habitus and the influence of childhood and family on forming attitudes.

Bourdieu, a prominent social theorist of the 20th century, made a significant impact on contemporary cultural theory across many different fields (Webb et al., 2002). Of Bourdieu's many conceptual tools, habitus is well suited to examining the workings of the social world through empirical research, both Maton (2012) and Reay (2004) highlight the benefits of using habitus within educational research and that it is an effective theoretical tool for interrogating data. One of the important aspects of habitus is its significant attempt to make

sense of the relationship between objective social structures and everyday practices (Webb et al., 2002:1). For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus is ‘intended to transcend a series of deep-seated dichotomies that shape ways of thinking about the social world’ (Maton, 2012:48). Thus, habitus creates a link between the past, present and future, the social and the individual, the objective and the subjective and structure and agency (Maton, 2012; Reay, 2004). Therefore, mediating between society and the individual, as Maton (2012:52 *italics authors own*) states ‘the experiences of one’s life course may be unique in their particular *contents* but are shared in terms of their *structure* with others of the same social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, nationality, religion and so forth’. Therefore, habitus provides an opportunity to explore the impact of the social world on the individual and how the social world is expressed through an individual’s dispositions. Thus, habitus is a useful theoretical tool to use in this research as it will provide an opportunity to consider the impact of childhood experience and background on the participants’ pedagogical beliefs, as well as considering how wider social structures play a part in influencing identity and beliefs.

The concept of habitus is a useful tool for examining the social structures that impact on the individual and how an individual person’s dispositions reflect the environment and culture they grow up in, thus providing the possibility to uncover the deeply buried structures of the social world (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu contends that the notion of habitus is constructed as systems of durable, transposable dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). They are durable in that they last over time and transposable due to being active within a variety of social

situations (Maton, 2012:50). The characteristics of habitus are embedded in every day actions so much of it is unconscious. Bourdieu emphasises that habitus is an embodied phenomenon, thus demonstrating the ways in which the body is in the social world and the social world is in the body (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, our habitus is ‘our predisposed ways of thinking, acting and moving in and through the social environment that encompasses posture, demeanour, outlook, expectations and tastes’ (Sweetman, 2009:493). These values and dispositions acquired from our cultural history tend to stay with us and influence how we respond to cultural rules and contexts (Webb et al., 2002) and can be understood as ‘one’s feel for the game’ (Bourdieu, 1990:63). The individual will feel natural and at ease in familiar cultural groupings, as the dispositions that make up habitus are the ‘products of opportunities and constraints framing the individual’s earlier life experiences’ (Reay, 2004:433).

Habitus, the past and the present

The habitus, although initially acquired as a result of childhood experience then manifests itself as a complex combination of past and present (Reay, 2004), resulting in a an ‘amalgam that is always in the process of completion’ (Reay, 1998:521). Individual histories are crucial in understanding the concept of habitus (Reay, 2004) and Bourdieu (1977; 1990) emphasises the importance of early experiences, as the habitus has historical roots, but also highlights the impact it has on the present, when he states, ‘a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles’ (1977:82). The family environment and

early childhood experience provide the initial and significant experiences for the development of an individual's habitus. The values and cultural practices of the family will support the reproduction and regulation of a child's habitus. Following early socialisation experiences, the experiences that follow will result in a more or less common habitus (Meisenhelder, 2006) and habitus can be restructured through further socialisation and encounters with the social world, such as schooling. This means that the structure of our habitus is neither fixed nor fluid, but our dispositions evolve – 'they are durable and transposable but not immutable' (Maton, 2012:52). This provides the possibility of the habitus to transform and does not confine an individual to the values and practices of their childhood, however, the re-structuring of the habitus is an ongoing and slow process (Thomas, 2002).

Institutional and Family Habitus

The structure of the environment supports the production of an individual's habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). As discussed above, the family, and the early social experiences that the child encounters within the family environment supports the production of the child's habitus. Other environments that influence habitus formation include schools and other educational establishments. Institutional habitus can be understood as 'the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation (McDonough cited in Reay et al., 2001). The concepts of institutional habitus and family habitus, draws on Bourdieu's work and has been further developed through the work of Reay (1989), Reay et al., (2001; 2009), Thomas (2002) and Tomanovic

(2004). Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) saw institutions as environments for social reproduction and particularly the education system as the arena where dominant classes and groups could reproduce themselves. Environments such as schools produce their own set of values and cultural norms and these produce institutional habitus, which can favour the knowledge and experiences of certain groups to the detriment of other groups (Thomas, 2002:431). Therefore, in certain institutions depending on the institutional habitus of that environment and whether it fits with the individual's personal habitus, the individual will either feel included or excluded. This is evident in the research of Reay et al. (2001; 2009) and Thomas (2002) when they explore the effect of institutional habitus on students' access and choice in higher education, demonstrating how class, gender and race interacting with the institutional habitus and impact on the students' education choices, with students from dominant groups (e.g. white, middle class) achieving more success. In other research employing the concept of institutional habitus Barber, (2002) explored how teachers in one particular school, understood, enacted and experienced their caring responsibilities. Evidence from the research suggested that wider societal influences, particularly around class and gender and the institutions' unique habitus influenced how the teachers perceived and cared for the pupils in the school.

Through using the conceptual tools of habitus and institutional habitus to support the interpretation of my participants' stories, I will examine how their past, upbringing and contact with various educational institutions may have impacted on the formation of their pedagogical beliefs.

Having discussed the main theoretical resources being used to bring a conceptual focus to this study, I now highlight some of the key limitations of these theories.

Limitations of the theoretical framework

The theories discussed have been drawn together to create a conceptual focus that is pertinent for this study and in the discussion above I have argued that these theories will facilitate the interpretation of my participants' stories. However, with all theoretical tools there are limitations and critiques. Therefore, I will discuss some of the most pertinent criticism.

The concept of gender

Francis (2009) asserts the diversity in the understanding of and interpretation of gendered behaviour. There is a range of opinions found across disciplines and within feminist thought there are differing views too. There are two main positions within these perspectives, one is based on an understanding that gender is socially constructed and this tends to be the view supported by western feminists, and the other sees gendered behaviour as tied to biological differences and that these differences are inevitable. However, within the social constructionist position there are also complexities and these are linked to the interpretation and understanding of the problematic terminology linked to gender theory. Part of the complexity when discussing gender, is that the terms gender, sex, male and female, masculinity and femininity are not easily defined. The different understandings of the term 'gender' leads to 'theoretical slippage'

(Skelton, Francis & Smulyan, 2009:5). The term 'gender' emerged from a social constructionist perspective, in order to describe the behaviours resulting from sex identification, with the terms male and female being more commonly replaced by masculinity and femininity. These terms all stem from using a sex/gender label. However, using the category of sex as a basis of these terms is not clear-cut. Although our sex is determined in the womb, as Francis (2009) highlights not everyone is identifiable by sex and although sex can be seen as an 'unproblematic, straightforward and common-sense categorization' (Francis, 2009:11) this is not always the case. Hawkesworth (cited in Francis, 2009) observes that if gender is connected to sex then this 'impedes feminism because it perpetuates biological determinism' (ibid:13). Butler (2006) presents a further theoretical challenge, by not just suggesting that the sex/gender dichotomy raises issues, but the categories of male and female are false. She questions the term sex, suggesting that 'this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender' (2006:9) and that through pursuing the sex/gender dualism then this maintains the 'belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it' (ibid.). The complexity connected to gender terminology and the various interpretations of gender theory is important to highlight and I concur with Francis (2009:14) when she states that it would be futile and misguided to assume that there should be a 'single, unitary feminist approach'.

Bourdieu and gender

As Adkins and Skeggs (2004) acknowledge, Bourdieu's social theory had little to say about gender and women and therefore it is acceptable to question how appropriate Bourdieu's theoretical tools are for feminist analysis. However, Skelton and Francis (2009) highlight how feminist educational researchers working in the field of social class and gender, have increasingly turned to Bourdieu's work particularly to analyse class inequality and the intersection of class, gender and ethnicity. Skeggs (2004) also argues that there have been a number of feminists who have developed and worked with his theories and that often these are used in an eclectic manner alongside other theories. Skeggs (2004) also acknowledges that this sounds 'messy' however she argues that it was Bourdieu himself who argues for flexibility in the use of his theories and that with all theories there are limitations to their use.

Habitus, structure and agency

One of the acknowledged strengths of habitus is its significant attempt to mediate between objective social structures and everyday practices. However, it is this area that raises questions and 'structure' is one of the many concepts Bourdieu is reluctant to define (Nash, 1999). Jenkins (2002) sees this as structuralist and determinist, arguing that 'habitus is the source of 'objective' practices, but is itself a set of 'subjective' generative principles produced by the 'objective' patterns of social life' (2002:82). Lawler (2004) argues that it is important to see habitus as generative and not determining. She contends that although

reproduction does occur, the dynamic character of the social world creates different outcomes.

The limitations and complexity of Bourdieu's ideas are widely acknowledged. However, I concur with Nash (1999) when he argues that a critical approach to Bourdieu's theoretical tools is necessary 'if anything worthwhile is to be gained' (1999:176) and with this approach these tools provide a more fruitful way of thinking (Grenfell, 2012).

Summary

A feminist social constructionist perspective, drawing on work by educational feminists (Acker, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Skelton, Francis & Smulyn, 2009; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Smulyn, 2004) provides a framework to guide my examination of how my participants' pedagogy has been influenced by gender and how the profession of early years teaching may have been influenced and framed by gender.

The theoretical tool of institutional habitus is used to provide an understanding of how the values and cultural norms of the schools and settings that the study participants worked in impacted on their pedagogical beliefs. Habitus will be used in the research design and analysis to provide a way of thinking about the significance of early childhood and family experiences and how the enduring values and dispositions that are developed early on in life might continue into adulthood and in the case of my participants, might have helped to shape their

pedagogical beliefs. This conceptual framework, using the theories together, provided an opportunity to gain a greater awareness of how the participants' class and gender had influenced their pedagogical formation and also a more detailed understanding of the influence of both structure and agency in shaping the participants' pedagogical beliefs.

This chapter introduces the theoretical position undertaken in this study. The next chapter will build on this as I discuss the methods and methodology of the study and how this influenced the process of research design and data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will outline and discuss the epistemological and methodological approach that led to the design and implementation of this study. An overview and justification of the methods of data collection and analysis based on a life history approach and a feminist social constructionist perspective are provided. Background details of the participants are presented and how the participants were approached and selected for the study is discussed. The ethical challenges faced within the study are examined and I discuss how I ensured the project was conducted within clear ethical guidelines and how I utilised a reflexive approach. The last section of this chapter introduces the approach to data analysis and discusses how the data were analysed and interpreted through a process of thematic analysis.

Research Questions

The focus of this research project was to explore how female early years teachers form their pedagogical beliefs. The questions that guided this project were:

- What are the key influencing factors that shape the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers?

- How does the participants' gender identity influence the formation of those beliefs?
- What role does childhood and family background play in shaping the participants' pedagogical beliefs?

Epistemological considerations

neither methods nor methodology can be understood *except* in the context of gendered social relations (Oakley, 2000:4).

This study is framed within a social constructionist feminist perspective. Although there is not one specific epistemological approach connected with a feminist perspective, feminists utilise a range of strategies for constructing knowledge about women and their social worlds (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). However, what makes a methodology distinctly feminist is 'the extent that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience' (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 2002:16).

A feminist approach recognises the significance and importance of women's experiences and makes a commitment to produce knowledge that will make a difference to women's lives (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004; Letherby, 2003). It can be argued that within social science research, women's experiences have often been omitted or distorted (Marshall & Young, 2009; Oakley, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1993). This invisibility and distortion occurs in situations where women's 'social presences' are high but their 'sociological visibility is low' (Stanley & Wise, 1993:27). Early years teaching is an area of education that is dominated by women but is associated with low status (Hargreaves & Hooper, 2006). Both

Moyles (2001) and Osgood (2006) suggest that the words used to describe the work of early years teachers and practitioners such as, 'emotional' and 'collaborative' does not help to support their professional status as these words are more associated with mothering and caring roles. However, Osgood (2006) in her feminist study on professionalism in the early years suggests that professionalism has been socially constructed and that early years practitioners have failed to embody the hegemonic form of professionalism and there is a need for them to reconstruct an alternative professionalism and identity. Smedley (1994) too investigates professional identity, and explores how female primary teachers describe their work and how women who teach may be positioned in society. She argues that we need to have a greater understanding of who the women who teach our youngest children are, and in order to make sense of their work we need to look at the complex and ambivalent ways in which female teachers are positioned within society.

Feminist research can take on a range of research techniques and epistemological positions and there are varying definitions and approaches to feminist research (Letherby, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). However, Francis, Skelton and Smulyan (2009) contend that gender is the core concern of the various strands of feminist theory and one of the main focuses for this study was exploring and highlighting aspects of the participants' gendered experiences.

In chapter three, I presented the conceptual framework for this study, which draws on a feminist social constructionist perspective, and the theorisation of gender as socially constructed (Acker, 1989; Grumet, 1988; Skelton, Francis &

Smulyn, 2009; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Smulyn, 2004). A social constructionist perspective supports the feminist approach (Lather, 1991) within this study. Social constructionism is the view that the world is socially constructed by the individuals who live in it. The meanings that individuals make are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural understanding (Burr, 2003; Creswell, 2007). Therefore, a social constructivist perspective supports the focus on exploring the formation of individual teachers' pedagogical beliefs and allows me to acknowledge that each participant would have been influenced by their own historical and cultural contexts and family background (Creswell, 2007). Through focusing on the specific contexts of the participants lives and work and developing an understanding of their historical and cultural contexts, I was able to gain a greater understanding of how their pedagogical beliefs were formed and how their life experiences and identity may have influenced those beliefs.

A qualitative approach

A qualitative methodological approach was undertaken for this study, which supported the feminist social constructionist perspective that the study was framed within. Qualitative research utilises an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Bryman (2008) argues, that the interpretivist philosophies such as social constructionism were developed in acknowledgement that the social sciences needed a research framework that reflected 'the distinctiveness of humans' (2008:15). The focus of this study, the pedagogical beliefs of female early years teachers, is a distinctively human

characteristic. A qualitative methodology that put an emphasis on human beings and their social interactions with the world supported me in understanding how the participants in the study understood and reflected on their own life, careers and pedagogical development, thus giving meaning and understanding to how their pedagogical beliefs developed. As Cohen et al. (2011) acknowledge, the social and educational world is a complex, multi-layered place and research within a qualitative paradigm focuses on describing and exploring the subjective meaning within this world. My aim was to share accounts of my participants' individual lived experiences and explore the complexities and possible similarities and differences that emerged when examining how their pedagogical beliefs have been formed and what aspects of their experiences and identity have influenced the formation of those beliefs (Gibson & Brown, 2009). One of the advantages of qualitative research is that it has the potential to generate data that has depth and richness and takes into account the individual and the context and the multiple realities that arise from the social world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Life History

The life history method has become increasingly popular with sociologists since the beginning of the twentieth century. The publication of Thomas and Znaniecki's (1918 – 1920) longitudinal study, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, became a landmark study for the development of the social science life history method. The approach has had changing popularity throughout the century, but in the latter part of the century, it became popular with certain groups, as a means to empower the disempowered. Feminists, and those

researching members of society, who are considered to be marginalised in terms of their social power, found that the method provided an opportunity for previously hidden members of society to be heard. As Goodson and Sikes (2008) suggest, the life history method attracts much encouragement as a way to support people 'who are arguably marginal in terms of their social power' (2008:10) and Middleton advocates the use of a life history method as a way of women 'recovering ourselves as sociological subjects' through making our experiences visible (1992:21).

The benefits of utilising the life history method in education, is advocated by Goodson and Sikes (2008) and since the 1980's a growing number of important life history studies in education, have emerged (Casey, 1993; Hoskins, 2012; Nias, 1989; Osgood, 2012). Goodson (1992) suggests that the developing interest in life history studies in education arose when researchers became interested in the social process of education. At this time, Goodson argued that researchers needed to 'confront the complexity of the schoolteacher as an active agent making his or her own history' (1992:4). The more recent studies of Hoskins (2012) and Osgood (2012) employ a life history approach to focus specifically on women in education; professors and early years practitioners. Research by these scholars not only demonstrates the need to hear the diverse female voices within all parts of the education profession, but also how specific aspects of identity, policy and history have impacted on the professional lives of these women.

Goodson and Sikes (2008) suggest that one of the reasons that the life history method is particularly appropriate within educational studies is ‘public and private cannot...be separated in teaching’ (Bullough cited in Goodson & Sikes, 2008:10) and in life history that holism is demanded (ibid.). The ability to explore both aspects of my participants’ private and professional lives was important to this study as both influence pedagogical beliefs. In *Primary Teachers Talking*, Nias (1989) highlights how teachers’ private and professional lives are intertwined. Her narrative research approach demonstrates both the personal and professional aspects of teachers’ identities and the large personal investment teachers put into their profession. Utilising a life history approach enables participants to talk about both their personal and professional lives. The connection between personal and professional identity was also highlighted in Goodson’s (1992) earlier research, when he emphasises how teachers often refer to personal and biographical factors, suggesting that professional practices are embedded in wider life concerns. When stating the fundamental arguments for a life history approach, Goodson and Sikes (2008) argue:

It explicitly recognises that lives are not hermetically compartmentalised into, for example, the person we are at work (the professional self) and who we are at home (parent/child/partner selves), and that, consequently, anything which happens to us in one area of our lives potentially impacts upon and implications for other areas too (2008:2).

The subjective nature of the life history method makes it well suited to exploring teachers’ perceptions ideal and beliefs (Evans, 1998; Goodson, 1992; Goodson & Sikes, 2008). This potential for engagement with subjectivity was a clear advantage in relation to this study, and by talking to individual early years teachers about aspects of their professional and personal lives, I could begin to explore which parts of their experiences and identity had impacted on their

pedagogical formation. The advantage of exploring individual lives is the ability to then place their narratives within a context by not placing them within a context means 'life stories remain uncoupled from the conditions of their social construction' (Goodson & Sikes, 2008:17). Coles and Knowles (2001) argue that 'context is everything' (2001:22) in life history research and that lives are never lived in a social vacuum. By placing the individual stories in a wider social context, I was keen to explore how each participant's life story had been influenced by wider events, such as political and historical factors. Life history acknowledges the importance of the individual, but locates their experiences within a wider social context, thus aligning itself with a social constructionist paradigm.

Developing a life history approach

Plummer (2001) highlights the diversity within the life history method, not only within the many sources available; interviews, autobiographies, biographies, letters, journals, artefacts. But also with the range of terms associated with the approach; life histories, life stories, life narratives, auto/biographies, oral histories. Atkinson (1998) suggests that these terms have little difference, suggesting that a life history and a life story are the same, just different terms. He suggests that:

A life story is the story a person chooses to let about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another (1998:8).

However, Goodson and Sikes (2008) and Bertaux (1981) contend that there is a clear distinction between life stories and life histories. Goodson and Sikes (2008) argue that the life story is the starting point, the first interpretative process as the lived experience is turned into the life story. The transition from life story to life history locates the life story within a historical and cultural context. It was this process that I utilised to gain a greater understanding of all the elements that may have influenced how the participants formed their pedagogical beliefs.

One of the many advantages of interviewing in feminist research is developing a sense of connectedness with the participants and that their voice as well the researchers voice can be presented (Etherington, 2004; Letherby, 2003; Reinharz, 1992). I concur with Griffiths (1995) when she states that ‘the use of personal experience is crucial to the development of a feminist perspective (1995:6). As I work in the field that I was researching in, I hoped that through using a life history methodology I would support my interest in critically understanding my own biographical experiences. I was aware when reflecting on my own early years pedagogy that much of what I believed in had roots in my past, for example my own childhood experiences, education and training. In considering my own pedagogy certain questions arose. How did my understanding of my pedagogical beliefs compare to other early years teachers? Could they too identify how experiences from their personal and professional lives may have influenced their pedagogical beliefs? Using a life history approach enabled me to explore the formation of individual early years teachers’ pedagogical beliefs, through looking at aspects of their professional and personal lives and their past and present experiences. Through the highly collaborative

nature of life history research (Goodson & Sikes, 2008) I hoped to gain a greater understanding of how other early years teachers had formed their pedagogical beliefs, as well as gaining more self-knowledge. Listening to others is rooted within feminist theory and through listening to the personal voices of others and entering into shared dialogue, new understandings can develop (Hesse-Biber, 2014).

Due to the collaborative process of life history research, and being aware of the part that I played in the process as the researcher, I will now discuss how I undertook a reflexive approach to the research process. I will also discuss other ethical considerations that I addressed, before moving on to explain the research design.

Reflexivity

It has been noted that life history interviews can have a non-hierarchical approach (Atkinson, 1998; Goodson & Sikes, 2008) and that, as is true in my case, it is often chosen as an opportunity to ‘give a voice’ to a people who are not heard. Feminist writing (Belenky et al., 1986; Hesse-Biber, 2002; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) also emphasises the importance of giving women a voice and allowing their experiences to be heard. One of the aims of this project was to give female early years teachers an opportunity to talk and discuss their pedagogical beliefs, and female early years teachers could be perceived as often ‘unheard’ members of the educational community. I aimed to conduct my study in a way that offered the teachers an opportunity to talk and be heard but within a shared context. I would concur with Schubert when he advocates the importance

of teachers 'not merely being studied....but invited to share in the creation of knowledge' (1991:201) and I felt strongly that the research should be as collaborative as possible. However, as the researcher I was aware that I was still in a position of power. Although the informal and collaborative nature of the life history interview often has more of a conversational quality to it, there will always be 'inevitable inequality' (Goodson & Sikes, 2008:102). As Goodson and Sikes strongly state 'possessing personal life story data inevitably confers power and, therefore, the potential to do damage' (ibid.:108). Thus, 'researchers have to avoid the temptation of understanding these materials only in terms of what the researchers themselves want to understand' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989:201). Van Manen (1999) talks of this in terms of reflexivity and highlights that reflexivity adds a level of self-consciousness to the interpretive act.

A reflexive approach lends itself to social constructionist and feminist position (Burr, 2003; Etherington, 2004; Holland & Ramazanoglu, 2002; Maynard & Purvis, 1994) and is seen as an important part of qualitative research (Berger, 2015; Cohen et al., 2011) and specifically life history research (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Etherington (2004) suggests that one of the reasons reflexivity is beneficial to social constructionism is that it supports the researcher in beginning to deconstruct fixed beliefs and consider other ways of thinking.

Through undertaking a reflexive approach, I acknowledged my personal role in the research process and my position as a researcher. In relation to life history research, Cole and Knowles (2001) argue that:

Being reflexive in research means engaging in an ongoing process of reflecting ideas and experiences back on oneself as an explicit acknowledgement of one's locatedness in the research (2001:42).

Therefore, from the onset of this study I endeavoured to be mindful of the set of beliefs that I brought to the study and that these would shape and influence the research design and methodological considerations that were undertaken. To challenge and understand the biases that I may bring to the research project involves being critically reflective and deliberately open about the epistemological position that is being taken, and that my world view, background and beliefs affect the way I conduct the study, use language, pose questions and filter information gathered (Berger, 2015). Etherington (2004) highlights the importance of the researcher being aware of their own feelings, culture and personal history and how these may affect how we interpret our world when she states:

If we can be aware of how our own thoughts, feelings, culture, environment and social and personal history inform us as we dialogue with participants, transcribe their conversations with us and write our representations of their work, then perhaps we can come close to the rigour that is required of good qualitative research (2004:32).

Thus I was aware that my gender, age, ethnicity, social class, personal experiences, beliefs, biases, theoretical, political and ideological stances (Berger, 2015) all affected how I undertook the research process. One important part of the reflexive process was to clearly express and represent my presence in the research process and acknowledge my 'researcher subjectivity' (Cole & Knowles, 2001:89). Coles and Knowles (2001) argue that when embarking on a life history project, all that we are, our self, comes with us and we need to

understand our 'baggage' as we start our journey; beginning with yourself and understanding yourself as a researcher is an important first reflexive step. Therefore, I will now share my brief life history.

I am a white, middle class, heterosexual, married woman in my thirties and at the time of writing this I have recently had my first child. I grew up in the South of England with my parents and older brother. My mother was a primary teacher and pursued a career first before marrying and having children. By the time she married my father and had children, she had had a successful career as a teacher, lecturer and head teacher. She took a number of years off to stay at home after my brother and I were born, but then went back to work to continue her career in education. My father had always wanted to teach, but having to leave school at 15 and then do National Service meant he was not able to pursue this until he was in his fifties, when he trained to be a secondary teacher.

I had a happy childhood and spent a lot of time with my brother playing outside. In fact, many of my childhood memories are focused outside, with lots of holidays involving walking and climbing and time spent in the garden in the tree house and building dens and bonfires.

My parents placed huge value on education and were keen to find what they considered to be the right school for my brother and myself to attend. This focus on education was partly connected to their own very different educational experiences. My mother attended an independent girls school, studied A levels and went on to higher education, whereas my father attended the local

comprehensive school and despite wanting to continue his education had to leave school at 15 to start work. When I was eight, we moved away from the area where my parents had grown up, to relocate to a small town about forty miles away. This move was purely so my brother and I could attend a small Independent progressive school. The school's philosophy was based on mutual respect between staff and pupils, valuing individuality and developing a social conscience. I was incredibly happy at school and found leaving after my A levels difficult.

School left a positive lasting impression on me and as I left to go to university, I already had many views and opinions about education. I knew I wanted to work with children, initially considering training to be an art therapist. I took a degree in Early Childhood Studies and Art and then decided to train to be a teacher and undertook a PGCE. I had enjoyed my degree and particularly welcomed the discussion and thinking around educational ideas. The PCGE course was more challenging and I found some of the placements difficult as I felt I was compromising my beliefs and having to teach in a way that I did not feel was right.

I have been teaching for 15 years now and have always taught in early years. I have taught in a range of schools and currently teach in a state nursery school. When considering my own pedagogy, I want to create a setting where the children feel respected and listened to. I endeavour to observe the children closely and plan activities and experiences to support their interests and developmental needs. I feel passionate about children having opportunities to

engage in first hand experiences such as cooking. I consider there to be lots of learning potential in natural, open ended materials and value resources such as clay and water. I find it hard to see how learning happens effectively in separate subjects, so have never wanted to teach higher up the school system. I have purposely stayed in early years as this is where I feel most comfortable and I feel able to teach in the way that fits my pedagogy.

A Reflexive Approach

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest that a reflexive approach, which they see as an important conceptual framework, helps to achieve ethical practice within the research project. They talk of ‘ethically important moments’ that arise when the researcher has to respond to a situation or moment. For example, this could be when a participant discloses something highly personal and having to decide how to respond in a sensitive and empathic way. Berger (2015) and Cole and Knowles (2001) also emphasise the importance of reflexivity in the process of ethical research in showing compassion to the participant and developing as a sensitive and responsive researcher.

As I conducted this project, there were many instances when I needed to challenge and reflect on my thinking and feelings and be critically reflective. I was conscious that I wanted to give the participants control over the interview and see it as a collaborative process. The advantage of utilising a more open ended interview method allowed the participants to talk in depth about what they felt was important, rather being rushed on to the next question (Hesse-Biber,

2014). I endeavoured to be a good listener (Plummer, 2001) and be responsive to what they were saying, by for example, nodding and keeping good eye contact when they were talking and not interrupting the flow of their conversation.

Working in the same field as the participants had its advantages, as I felt coming from the same profession would help me converse with the participants and I would have a greater understanding of their professional world. However, I was also aware that just because we had the same profession, there would be many differences in our experiences and also pedagogy. Therefore, I needed to be aware of any bias that I may have had, particularly if a participant was stating something that I did not agree with and so I had to avoid being judgemental (Goodson & Sikes, 2008). It was beneficial to reflect and make notes after each interview. Through keeping a reflective journal, I endeavoured to reflect on what the participants had discussed and considered similarities or differences in opinion or experience. Reflecting on the participants' life histories enabled me to consider my own and I gained a greater understanding of my own pedagogy through talking to the participants (Etherington, 2004).

The reflexive process was not just beneficial during the interview stage, but continued to be used during data analysis. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) stress the importance of continuing the reflexive process into data analysis as pre conceived ideas and assumptions are still present and it is the researcher who chooses how to interpret the participants' voices. How I continued this process will be discussed in the analysis section.

I will now turn to other ethical considerations and discuss how I addressed other ethical issues.

Ethical considerations

The Ethical Guidelines policy from Roehampton University (2011) and the British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines (BERA, 2014) informed how to tackle the ethical considerations arising from the study. As the primary research tool for this study was using life history interviews, which involved participants talking about possible aspects of their personal and professional lives there were a number of ethical issues that needed to be carefully considered and addressed.

Ensuring anonymity of the participants was crucial. In preparation for the interviews, I drew up a participation consent form for the teachers to sign (see appendix A for consent form). This explained the conditions of participating in the study and explained provision for anonymity and that participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. To ensure anonymity, each interview was given a code and participants were given a pseudonym. Any information arising from the interview, which could include identifying information such as school names or places were changed. Participants were offered the opportunity to read and review the interview data before it was used.

Interviewing early years teachers about their pedagogical beliefs by asking them to share their life story required high levels of trust and confidentiality. As

Goodson and Sikes emphasise ‘life history informants are required to make a considerable commitment in terms of time and intimacy of involvement’ (2008:90). Due to the personal, intimate nature of the interview a number of issues needed to be considered.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) highlight that conversations allow us we get to know each other and we learn about people’s experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in (2009:xvii). This was a clear advantage of using an interview method, but having access to a participant’s personal life needs to be approached with caution, not only in relation to issues of power, but for other reasons too. Goodson and Sikes (2008) urge the life history interviewer to be cautious about nosiness, suggesting that it can be easy to keep asking questions about an area that is not necessarily relevant to the research project. Having a set of interview questions was beneficial as this enabled me to keep the interview focused and relevant to my research questions. This is not to say that people did not talk about personal things or mention in passing significant life events. Due to the conversational style of the interview a wide range of areas were touched upon. Participants talked about sensitive subjects, such as death, divorce, becoming a mother and work place bullying, to name a few, however, these subjects were brought up by the participants and not by me, as the interviewer. I ensured that at the start of every interview the participant was aware that they should only answer questions they felt comfortable with and were aware that they could pause or stop the interview at anytime. The interview transcripts were shared with the participants to ensure they were happy with the data that had been gathered.

Research Design

The data for this study were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews drawing upon a life history approach. The process of data collection was undertaken in different phases. The first phase started with a pilot study of three participants in order to explore the process of life history interviewing, which was the main method of gathering data. The second phase consisted of life history interviews with the twelve participants, followed by a final phase, which was a second life history interview where the participants were invited to bring objects and photographs as a focus for discussion.

Before discussing how I conducted the interviews, I will share how I selected the sample, gained access to the participants and will also provide an initial description of each of the twelve participants.

Sample and Access

The participants for this study are 12 female early years teachers. I define early years teachers as qualified teachers (teachers with QTS) who are currently teaching in Nursery or Reception classes or Children's Centres, in either state or private settings in England.

As is common in qualitative life history research, I worked with a small sample size, as generalisation is not the aim (Creswell, 2007; Gibson & Brown, 2009). Goodson and Sikes (2008) argue that the adequacy of the data is not reflected in

the number of interviews but in the richness of the data and the aim of producing ‘thick description’ (Gibson & Brown, 2009:57). A small number of interviews can generate a rich set of data, as Bertaux states: ‘several life stories *taken from the same set of sociostructural relations* support each other and make up, all together, a strong body of evidence’ (1981:187 original emphasis). Life history interviews can generate a large amount of data so there are also practical implications for not having a large sample size.

Goodson and Sikes (2008) highlight that it is not usual for life history research to involve a random sample of informants. The participants in my study were not randomly selected, but identified by the use of purposive convenience sampling techniques (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Goodson & Sikes, 2008). This study focused specifically on female teachers, therefore only women were asked to participate. I wanted the sample to represent the range of different settings that early years teachers can work in. Therefore, I ensured that I interviewed teachers from both state and independent schools, reception and nursery teachers and teachers working in both nursery and primary schools and Children’s Centres. I also sought to interview teachers of different ages, who had been teaching for different lengths of time, as I was interested to explore whether the length of time that a person has been teaching had had any impact on their beliefs.

I was aware of and concur with the criticism aimed at some feminist research, that within feminist research issues of difference with regard to race, class, gender and sexuality are excluded (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004). Despite my main focus being on gender and to a lesser extent social class, I would not claim

that these women are representative of all women. The participant group were all white and had been born and brought up in England and were from working or middle class backgrounds. I would therefore not claim to make any generalisations from this group of women rather they offer an account of a ‘group of lives’ (Letherby, 2003). Therefore, it was not that I chose to ignore other factors of difference when choosing my participants, but for the purposes of this study I chose to focus on gender and social class.

As a practicing early years teacher I had built up a range of contacts and decided to utilise these contacts as a way to begin to access participants for the study. I therefore initially set about making contact with teachers or head teachers who I already had a connection with, utilising convenience sampling. Some people replied quickly and interview dates were arranged. Other contacts took longer and there were gaps between initial response and organising dates. One contact replied some months later, and had at the time of my initial contact been very busy but then felt she had time to be involved in the study. Some contacts did not respond at all. I was also aware that schools are very busy places particularly at certain times of the year, therefore I endeavoured to make contact at times which were less demanding.

Below is a table of the participants. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. This table provides key information about the participants and in chapter five I go into more detail when the participants life histories are shared.

Name	Age	Current job	Route into teaching	Length of time teaching early years
Jo	30s	Teacher in an Independent school mixed nursery and reception class	Completed a degree in art after leaving school, then did a secondary PGCE. Then retrained in early years.	Has taught early years for 3 years.
Grace	40s	Teacher in an Independent school mixed nursery and reception class	Completed a performing arts degree and PGCE after finishing school. Taught for one year then had a career break. Returned to teaching 3 years ago.	Has only taught in early years.
Helen	50s	Reception Teacher and Early Years Leader in state one form entry primary school	Completed a BEd after finishing school. Completed an MA (Early Years) four years ago.	Has taught for over 20 years. The last 14 in early years.
Rebecca	30s	Teacher in state nursery school	Completed a degree in Early Childhood Studies and PGCE as a mature student.	Has taught for 8 years, only in early years.
Sarah	20s	Reception Teacher in state one form entry primary school	Completed an art degree after leaving school and then a PGCE.	Taught for 3 years, last 2 in early years.
Karen	40s	Reception Teacher in state two form entry primary school	Completed a degree in Education Studies and primary teacher training (GTTP) as a mature student.	Taught for 2 years, only in early years.
Anne	40s	Teacher in a state nursery school	Completed a degree in Education Studies and primary PGCE as a mature student.	Has taught for 6 years, only in early years.
Kate	40s	Reception Teacher in Independent School and Early Years/Key Stage 1 Head	Completed a BEd after leaving school.	Has taught for over 20 years across the primary phase. For the last 7 in early years.

Mary	50s	Reception Teacher in state two form entry primary school	Completed a science degree after leaving school then completed a PGCE as a mature student	Has taught for 18 years, last 7 in early years.
Sophie	30s	Reception Teacher in state one form entry primary school	Completed a degree in Drama and a PGCE after leaving school	Has taught for 8 years, the last six in early years.
Kelly	20s	Nursery Teacher in two form entry infant school	Completed a BA with QTS after leaving school.	She is in her first year of teaching.
Emily	30s	Children's Centre teacher	Completed a BEd as a mature student	Has taught for 7 years, for one year in key stage one and the rest in early years.

Pilot Study

Prior to starting formal data collection, I conducted a pilot study with three participants, in order to explore the life history method. There are many advantages to conducting pilot studies and in relation to interviews these include rehearsing an interview method to gain a greater sense of confidence and exploring the adequacy and structure of the interview questions (Bryman, 2008). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) view interviewing as a craft, and urge researchers to learn and practise. Therefore, through the pilot study I wanted to rehearse my interview technique and ensure that I was prepared when undertaking the interviews for the main stage of data collection.

Life history interviews tend to be semi- structured, however Goodson and Sikes (2008) argue that much of it is about individual preference and that the researcher needs to find an approach that suits themselves and the informant.

Through my pilot study I wanted to find out whether the interview questions were appropriately framed to elicit the conversation and information that would inform the research questions. I also wanted to explore and practise my own interviewing style. Although I was keen for the participants to talk freely without too much interruption and for the interviews to have more of a conversational quality, I felt I would need to guide the interview somewhat in order to cover all the areas that I felt would be significant to my study. The questions I collated were informed by my review of relevant literature and reflected my understanding of pedagogical beliefs and the need to understand how different parts of the participants' identity and life impacted on the formation of these pedagogical beliefs.

The pilot interviews were positive and I found the participants willing to talk and the conversation flowed easily and did not involve me having to ask too many direct questions. Although I was mindful that the pilot interview participants were known to me, as I had asked teachers I already had contact with, I was aware that this would not be the case with all of the participants. Plummer (2001) stresses the importance of developing a good relationship with the participants when conducting life history research. Therefore, when embarking on the other interviews, if I did not know the participant, I felt it would be beneficial to meet them before the interview to begin to build a relationship.

During the pilot interviews, I found that beginning with an opening question such as 'Why did you become a teacher?' started the participants talking. The questions I had collated provided a useful tool and at the end of the pilot study I

transcribed the interviews and analysed the information that had been elicited. I considered carefully what I wanted the participants to talk about and the areas of their professional and personal lives that I believed would have influenced their pedagogical beliefs. Upon reflecting on the pilot interviews I could see the benefits of a semi structured interview format and felt I had gained a good balance with the questions, particularly as the conversation had flowed well and I was not frequently interjecting with a question.

Another benefit of piloting the interviews was it gave me a chance to try out the technology I would need to record and transcribe the interviews. These practical aspects of interviewing are important to address, as a recording device breaking down half way through an interview could be disastrous (Atkinson, 1998).

Conducting the interviews

The data collection process was conducted over two and a half terms, starting in the summer term 2013 and finishing early spring 2014. All 12 participants were interviewed during the first interview phase and then 10 participants had a second interview where they brought objects and photographs to discuss. I was unable to interview all 12 of the participants a second time as one participant went on maternity leave and the other participant was not available. Therefore, I conducted 22 interviews in total. The interviews ranged from half an hour to one and a half hours long. I will discuss the benefits of undertaking two interviews later in this section.

The interviews took place at a convenient time and location for the participant, which for most of the participants was at the end of the school day. All of the interviews took place in the participants' place of work except for two, which took place in the participants' homes as they felt more comfortable talking in their home environment. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) highlight that there are a range of methods for recording interviews including audio recording, video recording, note taking and remembering, I wanted to be able to concentrate fully on the interview and focus on the social interaction taking place. I concur with Atkinson (1998:33) when he urges the interviewer to 'listen well' which takes concentration and focused attention, therefore, through recording the interviews I could concentrate solely on listening, guiding and interacting with the participants. The other advantage of recording the interviews meant that I had a permanent record that could be re-listened to again and then transcribed (see appendix B for example of interview transcript).

Prior to each interview I had already made contact with the participants through email and explained the project and in some cases I visited the participants to discuss the project further. At the start of each interview, I explained the project in detail and shared the ethical consent form, and made sure the participants understood they should not answer any questions they did not want to and could stop at anytime. Once the interviews had been transcribed, the transcriptions were shared with the participants and they were offered the chance to change or clarify anything that had been said. All of the participants were happy with the transcripts. On a couple of occasions there were some pieces of information that

I had not gathered through the interview, so I emailed the participant for clarification and they were willing to answer the questions I had.

Atkinson (1989) suggests that although there are general guidelines to conducting life history interviews, the more interviews you do the more you will learn. I initially felt nervous about the interviews, feeling very much that I wanted to 'get it right' and aware that I wanted to put the participants at ease, listen well, be empathic and guide the interviews carefully. However, the more interviews I did, the more at ease I felt and the more flexible and open ended the process became. A number of the participants articulated at the end of the interviews that they had found the process 'interesting' and 'useful' and displayed an interest in the project and its aims. After each interview I wrote a note of thanks to the participant and agreed to continue to keep them up to date with progress of the project.

Interviews with objects

It is common when conducting life history interviews to conduct more than one interview. I decided to return to conduct another interview, with the aim of the second interview to build upon the first interview but this time to use photographs and objects as 'accessories' (Plummer, 2001) to the life story. Plummer discusses the increased use of visual images in life history research, highlighting the potential of 'biographical objects' to help jog memory and uncover further aspects of identity. Hurdley's (2006) research involving the construction of narratives around objects in the home cites the objects as essential players to life histories. Ahuvia (2005), Plummer (2001) and Hurdley

(2006) describe how possessions or objects can be used to explore memory and identity and Hurdley argues that ‘through telling stories about objects people are also telling stories about themselves’ (2006:729). Harper (2002) advocates the use of images in relation to photographs and photo elicitation and suggests that using something visual within an interview supports the human ability to respond to both verbal and visual symbolic representation. Emmison and Smith (2000) also advocate the benefits of visual research and discuss not just the benefits of more familiar images such as photographs, but the importance of using three dimensional objects, suggesting that these are reflections of the wider lives of communities and individuals. This echoes Turkle’s (2007) work on evocative objects. She argues that objects help to anchor memory and evoke thoughts and feelings.

I also recalled findings from the Study of Pedagogical Effectiveness in Early Learning (SPEEL) project (Moyle et al., 2002). They reported the benefits of using video footage to stimulate reflection and saw the process of reflection as ‘unpeeling’ pedagogical layers. I saw the objects as helping to facilitate the exploration of the participants’ pedagogical layers. The other justification for using objects to support the participants’ story telling was the key role objects and resources play in the early years teaching. I therefore felt that using objects would not feel like an unfamiliar proposition to the participants. There are many objects and resources that are associated with early years education in the Western world (Gura, 1996; Jones et al., 2012). Many of these objects have a long history and can be traced back to some of the key pioneers of the early years education, such as Froebel. Therefore, with a long tradition of objects in early

years education and objects and resources being a key part of the curriculum for young children, I was interested to see the meanings that the participants would attach to their choice of objects and what these objects may say about their beliefs and identity. I hoped that ‘stimulating interviewees to engage visually with familiar objects may help them to think in different ways’ (Bryman, 2008:448).

For the second interview, the participants were invited to bring photographs and/or objects that they felt represented their pedagogy. The aim was to avoid being too prescriptive about what they should bring, as these objects and photographs were to represent their pedagogy and would therefore be personal to them. However, as a guideline I suggested about six items/photographs. I included photographs as well as three-dimensional objects in case it was not possible to bring the object to the interview or if the object was not something tangible. I anticipated that the photographs and objects I asked the participants to bring would ‘act as a stimulus in situations where it might be difficult to generate a response to questions’ (Newby, 2010). As the participants shared aspects of their professional and personal lives, this second interview became an extension of their life history and the objects and photographs used became a focus for further storytelling, thus adding another layer to the participants identities and a greater understanding of their pedagogical beliefs.

Upon completion of the interviews I then moved to the analysis stage, and I will discuss next how I analysed and interpreted the data that I had collected.

Analysis and interpretation

This section discusses the approach that I undertook as I analysed and interpreted the data that were generated from the 22 life history interviews of the twelve participants. The approach to analysis was based on a thematic analysis approach, which was used to generate the salient themes emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ezzy, 2002; Gibson & Brown, 2009). I describe the different steps involved in the analysis stages but first I will discuss how I began to make sense of the data.

Making Meaning from the data

As I embarked on the process of analysis I was very much aware of the responsibility I felt towards the participants and the desire I had to share and tell their stories. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) remind the qualitative researcher that the analysis procedure is also a reflexive process and to be conscious of the subjective and interpretive nature of analysis. Therefore, my task was to ensure I maintained an ethical responsibility towards the participants, remained true to the data, whilst also telling their stories in an articulate and knowledgeable way.

I agree with Ezzy (2002) who suggests that it is valuable to transcribe the data as data collection occurs, rather than leaving it to the end of the data collection process. I followed this process and found this beneficial, as I was able to begin to construct interpretations and make notes and reflections during the data collection phase. Once all of the interviews and transcriptions had concluded, I

was left with a vast amount of data with the majority of the participants having over fifty pages of transcription data. I agree with Mauthner and Doucet (1998) when they suggest these initial stages of analysis can be messy and uncertain. Although initially daunting, my first task was to become familiar with this data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that immersion in the data is an important part of reflecting the 'essence' of what the participants are conveying. Therefore in order to immerse myself in the data, I listened to the interview recordings again and reread the transcripts a number of times. The transcription of data is important, as acknowledged by Bryman (2008) when he argues that capturing the interviewees' answers in their own terms is essential for the detailed analysis required in qualitative research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that through recording and transcribing, body language and voice and intonation are lost and that an interview recording is an impoverished version of a live conversation. However, I was aware that within the process of detailed analysis I could strive to keep the participants' voices at the forefront, therefore, in the process of editing and presenting the data I endeavoured for it to reflect and express as closely to what the participant had originally said. Goodson and Sikes (2008) discuss the issue of finding a balance between re wording and stepping away from the original and leaving the participants' words to speak for themselves. Within this fine balancing act I was aware that by taking the participants' spoken word, transcribing the spoken word and turning it into text and then locating it within a specific context turned the life stories into interpreted life histories. I would therefore not claim that the data are complete, but subjective and open to interpretation, offering a partial insight into the participants' lived experience. Just as I am interpreting the data, I am aware that

as the participants told me their stories that this was their interpretation of events and as with all stories they are adapted or elaborated on and change as they are revisited. The stories are in a state of flux or as Plummer describes them ‘ceaseless and shifting’ (Plummer cited in Measor and Sikes, 1992:212).

Thematic Analysis

The analytic approach used to examine the data involved the use of thematic analysis (Ezzy, 2002). Gibson and Brown define this as ‘the process of analysing data according to commonalities, relationships, and differences across a data set (2009:127). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that through utilising thematic analysis the researcher can generate a rich, detailed and complex account of the data.

To support the process of thematic analysis, I drew on the work of Charmaz (2014) and her development of constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz (2014) argues that undertaking a constructivist approach enables the researcher to acknowledge their position and perspective upon the research. This approach emphasises that concepts and hypotheses can be generated through the analysis of data. In order to explore the salient themes emerging from the data, that would best address my research questions, I was aware that there would be a combination of some pre identified themes focusing on the research questions and my understanding of pedagogical formation, and new undiscovered themes within the data. The model of grounded theory followed different stages, starting with the process of close reading and coding of the data, the identification of

codes, then categories (grouping of similar codes) and then finally themes (grouping of categories) emerge. Therefore, I started by working through the transcripts and coding the data (see appendix C). I then transferred these codes onto a spread sheet so I could see more clearly the categories and themes that were emerging (see appendix D). I also then created mind maps of the different themes that were developing (see appendix E).

Analysing objects

Alongside the analysis of the interview transcripts there was also the analysis of the objects and photographs to consider. In the second interview the participants were invited to bring photographs and/or objects that represented their pedagogical beliefs. These interviews were also recorded and transcribed, and the transcribed data were combined with the data from the first interview and went through the same process of coding and analysis. However, I also wanted to consider the objects themselves and what meanings could be drawn from them. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the methods I used with regard to the objects, and provide some illustrative examples of how the objects were part of the analysis of the findings. Alexander (2001) when writing about the analysis of visual images suggests that they are ‘multivocal’ and can be difficult to analyse due to their ambiguity and the multiple meanings they carry. Plummer too highlights the potential that objects have to ‘speak hugely complex stories’ (2001:57). In beginning to approach the task of drawing meaning from the objects, I decided to categorise and group the objects. I began by listing the objects into groups and then put them into a table (see below).

<p><u>Everyday objects/Teaching resources</u> Scarf and CD player (importance of Music) Books (x3) Dice and Board game A puppet Whiteboard and pen Glue Needle and scissors (creativity) Bowl and spoon (cooking and first hand experiences) Pencil and paintbrush (creativity) Letters A mud pie (outdoors and being messy) Wellington boots (learning outdoors) An egg (first hand experiences, making learning exciting eg. cracking an egg when cooking) Food (bringing home into school)</p>	<p><u>Areas of the classroom/large objects</u> Role play area Making area and the resources in it Outdoor area Climbing frame Woodwork bench A tree (symbolising outdoor play and natural materials)</p>
<p><u>Photographs</u> Photos of colleagues Photos of a project in the sand pit (represents found objects and freedom – children pursuing their interests) Photo of pet dog Laughing baby (represents happiness and fun) Photos of chicks hatching (real experiences) Photos from child's learning journal (active learning, following child's interests) Photo of the brain (importance of understanding brain development) Photo of children gardening (real experiences)</p>	<p><u>Personal/biographical objects</u> Collection of bags (interest in multiples) Scrapbooks Drawing books from childhood Books from childhood Recorder Photos that father took (represents creativity and father's kind patient approach) Grandmother's sewing basket</p>
<p><u>Objects as metaphors</u> Kaleidoscope to represent the children's colourful personalities and the colourfulness of early years (no day is the same). A light bulb to represent when ideas/concepts click for children and the excitement you feel as an adult. A scarf to represent warmth. A photograph of scales to represent balance. A heart to represent emotional connections and attachment. A wooden block to represent building firm foundations. A picture of children holding hands to represent diversity and uniqueness.</p>	

By categorising the objects in this way, a number of significant aspects of the objects were highlighted. It was interesting to note the biographical connection to some of the objects. In some cases, the object was directly biographical, for example Anne brought her grandmother's sewing basket. In other cases, the object itself was not biographical but it was linked to a memory from the past, such as the mud pie which Kelly chose, which was linked to a vivid childhood memory of making mud pies but also represented the importance she placed on children getting messy and playing outside. The objects highlighted the link with the participants' childhoods, emphasising the important part that the past plays in pedagogical formation (Alexander, 2008) and was also evidence of how the participants had been forming their pedagogical beliefs over time. It was also interesting to see how some of the participants had used objects as metaphors. Three participants chose to use objects as metaphors and this appeared to help them articulate key aspects of their pedagogical beliefs. Research with trainee teachers utilising pedagogical documentation methods has highlighted the benefits of using metaphor as a way to enrich practitioners thinking about pedagogy (Flannery Quinn & Schwartz, 2011; Flannery Quinn & Parker, 2015).

However, I was also aware that without linking the objects to the life histories, then it was difficult to interpret their meaning fully. They needed to be placed within a context. I became aware of this when I was looking at each participants objects in isolation and as a list. On their own, in some cases the objects seemed unremarkable. For example, on closer consideration, Karen's choice of a puppet, whiteboard and pens, photo of the display area of 'children's work' all had a connection and collectively represented something deeper. From reading her

interview transcript, and upon further reflection these objects showed her desire to build the children's confidence and make them feel proud. This was something she clearly articulated in her interview. The puppet was to encourage the quieter children to speak, the whiteboard and pens had helped children during phonic sessions and made them feel they could make a mistake as it was easily rubbed out and the display area was where children could hang pictures and photos of things they felt proud of. The importance of self-confidence and being proud was a theme that ran through Karen's interview. She wanted this for the children in her class and also reflected how her family were 'proud' of her when she was a child and also more recently as she finished her degree and qualified to be a teacher. Karen had a loving and supportive family that helped to instil this confidence in her therefore, it is interesting to note that she referred to the children as her extended family and that she wanted them to feel confident and happy too. It was interesting to look at the objects in categories to see themes emerging, but it was also important to see them within the context of the participants' life history as they added an important additional layer to the stories being told.

Summary

This chapter has presented the methodological approach that underpinned the implementation of this study.

The focus of this study is to explore the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers. Twelve female participants took part in the study,

who all taught in England in early years but who taught in a range of settings and had been teaching for different lengths of time. The sample was not ethnically diverse, therefore this study cannot claim to be representative of all female teachers. I also acknowledge that with a small sample size, I will not be making any generalisations from the findings. In keeping with a life history approach, the aim was to take a subjective and emic approach (Goodson & Sikes, 2008).

Utilising a feminist social constructionist perspective helped to recognise the significance and importance of women's experiences (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004). A social constructionist perspective also supported the focus on exploring the formation of the participants' pedagogical beliefs and helped to acknowledge that each of the participants would have been influenced by their own historical and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2007). A qualitative methodological approach allowed me to describe and explore the subjective meanings within the participants' worlds (Cohen et al., 2011). A life history method, with its open-ended interview approach provided the opportunity to explore aspects of the participants' personal and professional lives. It also allowed for a more collaborative process, through having a shared conversation and provided the opportunity to listen to the stories of female early years teachers (Goodson & Sikes, 2008). Through utilising thematic analysis, a rich and detailed account of the data was generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As part of the analysis process, the transcription data from the interviews was used to create the participants' life histories. In the following chapter, the

participants' life histories will be shared in order to gain a greater understanding of their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Participant Life Histories

In this chapter, the twelve life histories of the participants are shared. I acknowledge that these are interpreted life histories and just as the participants have offered their own interpretation of events, by transcribing their words and creating a life history, I am offering a partial insight into the participants' lives (Goodson & Sikes, 2008). However, sharing aspects of the participants' lived experience provides a clearer understanding of key events and experiences in their lives and how these may be significant in shaping their pedagogical beliefs.

Jo

Jo is in her thirties. She currently teaches in a Reception and Nursery setting in an Independent school, which is based on a Froebelian philosophy. She has been teaching in early years for three years, having originally trained to be a secondary art teacher. She grew up on a farm and is one of four siblings. She describes her family as large and says 'we would often get together as a huge extended family'. Her father is one of four children and so is her mother. She spent a lot of time with her grandmother as a child and describes her as an influential person in her life. Jo went to the small local village primary school, which she loved and recalls it as being 'fun, but quite formal'. She then moved on to the secondary community college which she describes as 'a bit of a culture shock, going from a small community and you know growing up on a farm, going to small school to then going to a 12, 15 hundred (pupil) college'. But she remembers from year 9 beginning to enjoy it and then 'loved it and worked

hard'. From the age of 7 Jo went camping with an education charity called Forest School Camps. She went every year, camping in different places in the UK and in Europe and then at the age of 17 started volunteering as a member of staff. She describes this experience as being influential when she decided to teach young children. She left school after her A levels and did an art degree and then trained as a secondary art teacher. She taught for two years and then stopped teaching as she had her children. She then worked as a child minder while her children were growing up as she felt it was important to be at home when her children were young. When she decided to return to teaching she was drawn to working with younger children, partly through her experience of working with younger children through forest schools. She applied for a job at her current school due to being drawn to its Froebelian philosophy and focus on outdoor learning. When Jo went to look round the school, seeing the wooden blocks in the Kindergarten reminded her of her own childhood experiences. She initially got a job working in the Kindergarten (3-5 year olds) as a teaching assistant. As she was secondary trained, the following year she did her EYP (Early Years Practitioner) course to provide her with an early years qualification, and then became a teacher in the Kindergarten. She describes this transition as a challenge, due to the responsibility of managing people. She feels she is becoming more comfortable and feeling confident to do things her way and having ownership within her role. Since teaching at her current school she 'has the confidence in teaching how I want to'. Jo describes being supported by her teacher colleague who also returned to teaching after a break. Jo feels that she is able to teach in the way that she believes and the school supports her philosophy. When discussing what she feels she wants to provide for the children in her setting she talks about time and

space ‘...the time and space to play or to have the time for people to listen to them’. She remembers the way her grandmother was really good at noticing and commenting on things she’d done and being positive and she tries to recreate this in the classroom. She reflects on the impact of her upbringing and how it has influenced her teaching, and feels that her grandmother’s positive influence was passed on to her mother and then her, and this has inspired her in her work. Jo feels passionate about resources and wants the children to have a range of open-ended materials to explore. On further reflection about resources Jo says ‘I’m a collector of stuff ...I don’t know whether that came out of being an art teacher or just growing up on a farm full of junk and stuff... it’s a big part of what I do is just collecting and bringing in, bringing things in. I work in a nice big barn and we have big outside spaces so I can do that, and the children, they do enjoy it’. On reflecting on her current job, Jo feels it is the right place for her as she likes the familiarity of her setting to her home life and the fact that she can connect parts of her personal life to her school life.

Grace

Grace is in her forties. After doing A levels she did a performing arts degree and then did a primary PGCE course and taught in a Reception class for one year. She then left teaching to have children. She returned to teaching just over three years ago and initially came back into the classroom as a teaching assistant and then as a teacher. She works part time in a Reception and Nursery setting in an Independent school, which is based on Froebelian philosophy. There are teachers in Grace’s family and when she was 15 she did work experience in a school and it was then that she decided she wanted to teach. Grace found learning difficult at

primary school, but recalls that it was at secondary school that learning made more sense to her. 'It's almost like a light bulb went on and I did loads of music and the music helped me with my maths and then it helped me with my English and things just sort of socially slotted into place and I was really in my element'. Grace finished school and became a teacher. She recalls her first year of teaching as very challenging, as she found it hard to cater for 35 children's individual needs and felt that this was not the way she wanted to teach. Grace took a break from teaching and in that time had her three children. She feels being a mother has influenced the way she teaches. When her first child went off to school at four she began to think more about mothering and what was right for the child. She looked into alternative education and moved her children to a Steiner School. She realised this was the type of education she wanted. She recalls 'Because I was state trained, my Grandma was state, my first child went to state, it doesn't have to be like that, there's other ways of doing it and it felt like the, the home was more linked...and it felt like a more natural environment, more caring, softer, more child-centred'. Two of Grace's children attend the school she now teaches in. She initially started volunteering and then got a job teaching in the Kindergarten. Grace feels that she's still learning and developing her teaching. Grace values the home links that she feels she can develop within her practice and wants to provide the children with home experiences such as cooking. She feels it's important to comfort and nurture the children and provide a high level of emotional care. She values outdoor learning and wants the children in her setting to be outside as much as possible. She also wants them to have the time and space to play and explore and particularly values resources that she describes as 'found' objects, such as tyres and pipes. She creates lots of

opportunities to watch and listen to the children and wants to help them develop at their own pace.

Mary

Mary is in her fifties. She grew up with her parents and sister and describes her upbringing as nurturing. Her grandmother lived next door and she remembers playing outside. She recalls, 'I'd spent hours in the garden with buckets of sand and water and mud...she (Mother) didn't mind at all and we had a big garden. My grandmother actually lived next door and we planted things and made a mess and yeah it was quite, when I say relaxed you still had to do things but mostly I spent all the time outside'. Mary describes her parents as being very supportive and encouraging her to do her best. She recalls them as being intelligent and capable parents and if they had had the opportunity they would have gone to University, but instead they needed to leave school and earn a living. Mary went to a state primary school and passed her 11 plus exam and was one of two children in her year to then go on to the Grammar school. Mary enjoyed school and enjoyed learning. She sat her A levels and went to university to study Physiology and Biochemistry and then worked in the NHS. During her degree she took a module in cognitive development and found it fascinating and reflects that this is when she first started thinking about teaching. Mary had three children, then after becoming a parent she started to work with children running toddler groups and then working in a Nursery. When her children were older she decided to train to teach and did a PGCE. She reflects on becoming a parent and felt it gave her a more 'nurturing perspective and also it, I realised how important it was to get those early years right because everything then builds upon it'. Mary

specialised in Key Stage 1 during her PGCE and the school where she now teaches was where she did her final teaching practice, she has taught there for 18 years. She originally started teaching in Key Stage 1 and did this for a few years. She then had the opportunity to train to be a Nurture Group Teacher, a role she found very interesting as the training focused on developmental theories. Mary then moved to a mixed Reception and Year One class which she found difficult. She then went on to teach just Reception which she has been doing for the past 7 years. She would now class herself as an early years teacher. She recalls moving as 'quite difficult' at first but as the curriculum changes have happened in early years she feels its become less formal and now feels 'with the development of the EYFS it's become more developmental, more led by the children and I've learnt with them really, and I feel really comfortable with it now 'cause I just I can see it works'. Mary feels lucky that she works with supportive staff that value early years and a head and deputy who value a less formal approach.

'People don't understand it and I think it comes from a sense of control. You're not in control, not literal, I mean you have that authority but you're not in control are you'. In thinking about her day-to-day practice, Mary values the outdoor environment and feels that some children learn better outside. She also enjoys music and dancing and sharing books with the children. In reflecting on what she's given the children she's taught 'I hope that I've given to the children not necessarily a body of knowledge but I hope that I've given them self-belief, confidence in themselves as learners, as achievers and as a sense of security in a sense of positive well-being that school is a good place to be, it's a place to learn, it's a place to do different things, try different things and just have a go. That's what I would like them to have achieved'. She also feels it's important to nurture

both the children and the parents and create a secure setting. She values the security and love she received in her own background. Mary is concerned about the current climate in education and is worried the early years curriculum is becoming more formal again. She is due to retire soon and ponders on what she wants for the children in her class, 'in many ways that's far more important to me, that they flourish, than some sort of tick list of things that they need to learn, because if they, they're not comfortable with themselves now and have a sense, strong sense of themselves and purpose then they're not going to get it later'.

Emily

Emily is in her thirties. She grew up with her parents and sister. Emily went to a small Independent girls' primary school and then a girls' state secondary school. She recalls 'liking school' and 'getting on with it' but has no particularly strong memories of teachers, events or activities. After leaving school Emily went to college to do an NVQ in Health and Social Care. At this point she hadn't thought about teaching but was considering working in social care. For a couple of years she worked in a day nursery but she felt it did not have future career potential and was poorly paid, so she then decided to apply for a job as a teaching assistant at a Independent primary school. It was during this job that she was encouraged to think about becoming a teacher. She recalls, 'I think they saw something in me as well and I think they could see that I could be more than a TA'. During her time there she was inspired by the teachers and excelled in her role and often took a lead in the classroom. Emily gained a place at university to train to teach and completed a primary BEd, specialising in Early Years. She felt naturally drawn to early years having had the experience of working in the Reception class

in her TA job and enjoyed the play-based way of learning. Emily describes her final teaching placement in a Reception class as being the most influential part of her degree 'I would say the most influential part was probably my final year and I was with the most amazing teacher there and she, I just feel like I learnt so much from being with her and she just really kind of set me up I think for ... 'cause I had just always kind of felt at home in early years and going into the upper key stages just didn't excite me like the early years did and she was just an amazing teacher and I think she gave me so much positive feedback and praise as well that it's that belief that knowing that you can do it'. Emily finished university and got a job teaching in a mixed Reception and Nursery class at a small village school. She recalls it being hard work as she had to set up the early years unit and she was the only early years teacher. Then after a year it was decided Emily should move to Key Stage 1 for a year. After this she went on maternity leave to have her first child. She decided to not go back to the same school when she returned to work and instead got her current job as a teacher in a Children's Centre. On reflecting on her pedagogy, Emily says, 'I'm a massive believer about a kind of real nurturing environment and especially with young children, a place that they feel safe and secure and where adults don't feel like they have to have a barrier between them and the child, that it's OK to sit them on your lap and read them a story, you know to have a closeness'. She also values relationships, not just with the children but with parents too, and feels that becoming a parent has influenced this and she now understands the challenges of parenting. Emily also values 'communication and language' and talking to children as much as possible. She wants the 'children to be guided and developed rather than more formal kind of teaching of things'. She places importance on

early development and in her role now that involves supporting parents and other practitioners. She feels she is continuing to learn and recent training on brain development has been influential. She feels she has a responsibility to keep learning and since coming into her current job she recalls how her thinking has changed. She reflects on how her ideas on outdoor play have changed during her career, as initially she felt it was 'too easy to just take them outdoors so I now understand that giving them the opportunity to do that but making sure there's key learning opportunities out there as well'. She feels this greater understanding is due to her current job, where there is a big emphasis placed on outdoor learning. She feels she has grown in confidence over her career. She reflects though, that it takes along time to achieve this type of confidence 'But that I think takes years to get that confidence....this is what I believe and this is what, this is why we do this.. and you can show that the children are developing and learning'. On reflecting on her career journey, Emily feels there have been pivotal people along the way 'I think everywhere I've been there's always been one person that influenced, and sees things in you I think is a huge thing as well. So, you know, (the teacher) on my teaching practice she was really influential, then the head teacher at (first school) she was really influential and could see things in me as well and then obviously coming here I think (the head) is just amazing and as I think it's having people that will push you along the ladder.....and grow you and I think that's, through you know doing my course as well.....(it) is people who you work with and what they make you become so I think influential people are key to making you influential'.

Anne

Anne is in her forties. She grew up with her mother, then from the age of 15 with her mother and stepfather and also had lots of contact with her grandparents. She describes her background as 'working class with strong principles and respectful'. As her mother was at work, she spent time with her grandparents in the school holidays. She did lots of practical activities with her grandparents like baking, garden and woodwork. She describes her time at primary school as a positive experience where she had lots of fun. When Anne moved on to secondary school she describes it as 'a bit of a shock really'. She passed her 11 plus exam and went to the girl's grammar school, which had a 'very, very austere Head'. She was surprised that she got in and she had never considered herself to be academic and she did well during the first few years. She then became very rebellious. During her A levels, she decided she didn't want to go to university but wanted to join the fire service but her school was not supportive. Five months into her A levels, Anne decided to leave school. When describing her family's reaction she says, 'I wouldn't say my parents weren't supportive 'cause they were, for me to leave school and get a job was completely normal, it would have not been normal for me to go to university, I don't think they had a full understanding of what I was missing out on'. She started work in a department store and within 11 months was working as a buyer. She then moved down towards London at 19 to join her boyfriend and continued on her career path, managing a shop, then becoming a development manager and then her job took her away from home as she helped to set up new stores around the country. During this time she married and had two children. It was when she had children she decided to give up her job. She then started helping out at her children's pre

school and became a child minder. Her decision to take this route 'was convenient and fitted in with lifestyle, 'cause it fitted in with what my husband was doing'. However, the more she worked in early years the more she enjoyed it and during this time was encouraged to do her nursery nurse training. After finishing her training she got a permanent part time job at the nursery school she now works in. The head teacher was 'extremely supportive' and encouraged her to start a degree. At this point she wasn't planning to teach 'even when I went back to studying and education, it still wasn't on my mind that I was ever going to be a teacher'. She describes her time studying as a positive experience and it inspired her to do her job. After finishing her degree and continuing her work as a nursery nurse, she decided to go and do a PGCE. So she left her job and did a PGCE at the local university completing two placements, in a Reception class and a Year One class. During her Year One placement, Anne felt her early years knowledge was beneficial and she tried to make learning 'fun' and organised a range of activities for the children to choose from, similar to early years. She then taught Reception for two years and following that had the opportunity to go back to her former nursery school to work as a teacher. 'The head who had sort of inspired me to go off and do my own teaching was still there and she rang me and said, 'you know, I want you back'. In describing her work as an early years teacher she says 'it's about allowing them (the children) to have freedom and trust them and their abilities, I like the freedom and spontaneity that you can have with early years. That's my personality even in my private life, like 'let's go and do this'. In discussing the activities she likes to do with the children, she likes to 'get messy' and loves sharing books with the children and making up stories. She also feels it's important that the children are taking risks. During her

degree she did some research on young children accessing the woodwork bench and subsequently did some work with the local early years team and went to promote woodwork to different settings. She was also instrumental in the school purchasing the large climbing frame in the garden, with a high pole for the children to slide down. She relates back to her own childhood and her experiences of taking risks. 'I used to spend a lot of time with my granddad in my granddad's shed, and there were boxes of nails and screws'. Anne feels confident in the way she teaches and she feels strongly that she has belief and conviction in what she is doing and hopes that she can inspire other people who are starting in the profession. However, she feels it's important to develop your own principles and beliefs and that people have to discover their pedagogy. She feels that being allowed to make mistakes and discover things for herself has been beneficial and that the head teachers she has worked for have 'let me find out and I learned a lot from that'.

Kate

Kate is in her forties. She grew up with her parents, brother and sister. She describes her background as middle class. Her parents came from affluent backgrounds and both attended Independent schools. Kate describes quite a formal upbringing and does not recall much emotional warmth during her childhood. She attended a large state primary school which she feels wasn't a particularly positive experience. 'I wouldn't say my primary years were particularly enjoyable I just remember feeling a bit detached from it.' She then attended a small private girls school where she flourished more, however she recalls the school being very formal with most of the lessons being very dry. She

doesn't feel there was a focus on independent learning as she remembers. 'I got my 'O' levels but there was nothing about loving learning, it was being compliant enough to respond to what you were taught rather than developing an independent love of learning and I think that's it, independence is really key to me because I think I lacked a lot of independence in both my personal life but also my education'. Kate went to do A levels at sixth form college. She had originally wanted to be an architect, then she felt she wanted to do something that helped others so decided she wanted to be a primary teacher '... but it is as black and white as that. You know there was no sort of 'ahh' light bulb moment or anything like that...but I think what I realised was well I decided I wanted to be a teacher that it is definitely because I wanted to do something to enrich or help others'. Kate went to teacher training college and completed a four year primary BEd. Kate excelled in her teaching placements and her confidence grew. Kate has been teaching for over 20 years and has taught across the primary range, including being a houseparent to teenagers. Kate has taught in a Reception class in an Independent school for the last seven years, and is currently the head of the lower school. When Kate reflects on her career, she doesn't feel she's been particularly inspired by the people she works with, but does feel she's been respected and believes reflecting and developing her practice over the years has been important. Kate feels that she has been allowed to teach in the way she has wanted to. She recalls when she was working in one school, 'I was in Year One and Two and I had a role play area and we did child initiated learning and things like that and they didn't stop me because they knew ultimately that even though you know, I was giving children the opportunities for play that I knew what I was doing enough to make it ... Yes we were making progress and it was you

know I was interacting appropriately with them and I knew enough about child development in the areas to know what you need to put in place to get the children to the next step so I would say the biggest thing is they haven't interfered with what I've done in the classroom, they've offered me support, they've given me responsibility and I have just felt valued'. Kate feels she's always felt confident about her teaching and feels that 'I suppose ultimately the confidence has come from children being happy. Seeing them in the classroom, seeing them happy, seeing them progressing and I suppose feedback from parents, from other colleagues, so that's where the confidence has come from'. Kate also feels that she has a good understanding of child development and being able to articulate that also gives her confidence. 'I think it has come from experience from, yes, reading books, and articles now, and just also standing back observing you know my own children'. Kate has two children. Due to her own childhood being formal and lacking in warmth and physical affection, it was important to her that her children had a different experience and this has also influenced her teaching. Through becoming a parent, Kate was able to parent in the way she'd always hoped she could 'when I had the girls it was the way I always felt a parent should be and could actually be that parent and I suppose from doing that and getting the feedback from them and the relationship I had with them was you know enough to make me think yes I do understand'. In the classroom, developing the children's personal, social and emotional development is very important to Kate and she wants the children to feel 'emotionally secure and have such a positive self-esteem'. Having children, has also made Kate have a greater understanding of the parents at school and she works hard to build up positive relationships with parents and is keen for them to be involved and has an

open door policy'. She acknowledges that teaching at an independent school comes with more parental pressures and she is keen to talk to the parents about child development. 'They want to know that they're reading and writing but they don't want their children stressed...I talk openly about play, I talk about topic you know, topic learning approach, I talk about practical activities, I talk about, it has to be meaningful, it has to be in context too, for the children. And it has to look at how they learn, you have to factor in where their stage of development, you cannot make a child who cannot hold a pencil to write'.

Sarah

Sarah is in her twenties. She grew up with her parents and two brothers. Her mother is a trained Nursery Nurse and was at home with her when she was younger. Sarah recalls doing lots of different activities with her mum when she was growing up. She was allowed to get messy and play in the garden. Her mother stayed at home while she was young and Sarah feels she enjoyed it and didn't want to rush back to work. Sarah enjoyed school, 'I had a lovely time. I do remember lots of it, school plays and play times and school trips and things like that'. She feels that she always knew she wanted to teach. 'I think I've always wanted to be a teacher. I think it's always been in the back of my mind. I had a lovely teacher, when I was in reception. I always remember her and she was very calm and very relaxing, she was a really lovely teacher...and one that I've always thought 'yeah, I'd like to be like her'. It's always sort of been in the back of my mind and at secondary school um... I loved art, I loved my art teachers - they were very inspirational'. Sarah did her A levels then an art foundation diploma and then went to do an art degree. After finishing her art degree she

applied to do a primary PGCE specialising in 3-8 year olds. She did two school placements, one in a Reception class and one in a Year Two class. She didn't enjoy her first placement. Her mentor wasn't very supportive and she recalls the classroom being very small with nothing inspirational in it. At the end of her PGCE she didn't feel very prepared and felt that a lot of her training didn't then prepare her to go out and teach. She recalls having sessions on teaching children to read, but nothing on child development, or setting up a learning environment. Sarah initially started teaching in Year Two in a temporary job, then moved schools to another Year Two position. She was soon moved into early years, as the head teacher didn't feel she was doing a very good job. She is now in her second year of teaching Reception full time in a state primary school. She describes moving schools from her first temporary job to her current school as difficult and she felt unsupported, with no mentor and initially no access to NQT training. When she was moved from Year Two to EYFS part way through the year. She felt like 'you're making me feel like I am just the crappiest teacher in the world. And then it's like you're demoting me. Oh you're not good enough to teach top end'. However, once in early years Sarah had a mentor and support from the local early years advisory team and she began to feel more confident. After finishing her NQT year she began to relax more. She now feels that she is growing in confidence and enjoying teaching. Now that Sarah is more empowered at work she says she feels more proactive and wants to do exciting things with the children. She has been inspired by the early years advisors that she has had training and support from and would 'love to be able to do everything they say to do'. When discussing the classroom environment, Sarah believes it is important to have engaging resources that are open ended. She is

keen to follow the children's interests and give them real life experiences. She uses a bowl, spoon and egg to represent her belief in learning through first hand experiences. She feels that this year she has been able to pursue this belief and she has started cooking and gardening with the children and has brought in other adults to help. She also feels 'personalising learning and enabling play' are important, as well as encouraging the children to feel 'empowered' and make choices. Sarah feels there is pressure from above to do more formal learning but she wants to ensure the children get other experiences. She states, 'I think our children need things like cooking and experience with pets and animals, being outside and talking about what they see and checking on things, I wouldn't stop doing it cause I know the value of it even though it's not celebrated'.

Helen

Helen is in her fifties. She grew up with her parents and siblings. She recalls a happy childhood, where she had a lot of freedom to play outside. Her family was musical and she played the recorder, piano and the church organ. She feels she was drawn to teaching when she was younger and enjoyed helping her mum out at the playgroup that she ran and babysitting for a local family. Helen enjoyed all of her schooling and after doing her A levels she went to teacher training college and completed a BEd. She feels she wasn't 'clever, or posh enough' to go to university so opted for teaching college. After qualifying she moved to London and for the first 13 years of her career she taught in an infant school, teaching early years and infants. For the past 14 years she has taught Nursery and Reception. She currently teaches in a state primary school and is the head of the EYFS in her school and in 2010 she completed an MA in Early Childhood

Studies. She feels the MA has been really inspirational and has enjoyed reflecting on her teaching and learning new things. She recalls, 'the main tutor we had there was really inspirational and the people that she introduced us to and the reading that she introduced us to, the new ideas all came together'. Helen has seen a lot of changes in education during her time as a teacher. She remembers the National Curriculum coming in and the increase in paperwork and felt the curriculum became much more rigid. During her time in her current job, she feels she has worked hard to be in a place where she is teaching how she wants to. She feels strongly that the children should have ownership over their learning. 'I want them to feel that they own what they are doing. This is their environment. I really want to give them a sense of owning their learning and being a part of it'. As part of her MA project she redesigned the outdoor space and involved the children in the planning and design of the garden. She believes it is important that the children have freedom to explore outside and not be watched all the time. She also values creativity and wants the children to have lots of resources to explore and make things with. Helen loves the excitement of early years and watching the children learn new things and uses the metaphor of a light bulb going on to represent when children move forward in their learning. She says, 'that feeling you get, you still get that feeling of butterflies in your stomach. We were saying weren't we about the light bulb going on and just feeling so thrilled when they get something and that has to be part of why we do what we do'.

Rebecca

Rebecca is in her thirties. She grew up with her parents and older brothers. She recalls a 'closed' childhood. Her mother lost a baby before she then went on to

have Rebecca, and so Rebecca was very protected. She remembers not being allowed to play out or do anything that was considered dangerous. One strong memory she has is playing with a cardboard box, she recalls: 'but one of my favourite things was an empty cardboard box that I would go inside with... I had a toy monkey, and make up stories inside this cardboard box'. Rebecca's father was quite formal and she remembers feeling frustrated by not being able to negotiate with him but having to do as she was told. When Rebecca finished her GCSEs, she was encouraged to do A levels. However, she was keen to pursue an NNEB course, but her father and teachers dissuaded her as they felt she should do A levels as she was academically bright. She tried various A level courses, but did not finish them and then decided to enrol on the NNEB course as that was what she really wanted to do. Once she had finished her training, she started working at a Froebelian nursery where she was very inspired by the head teacher. She remembers that the head was 'the first person to really get me excited about children's learning'. She feels the experiences she got during this time have been very influential and recalls how the children were taught, 'everything was planned from children's schemas so it was very tailored to what children were interested in, what they were fascinated with, you know. I can't remember really a time seeing children wandering around not quite knowing what to do. You know, so fitted exactly with what they needed. And it's lots of children learning things for themselves and exploring things for themselves, not being told to do this'. During her time working at the nursery, she was encouraged to go to university and completed a degree in Early Childhood Studies and then went on to do her teacher training. She has now been teaching for 8 years and currently teaches in a state nursery school. Rebecca feels it's important to personalise the

children's learning and plan from their interests. She says '...planning from the child...you know kind of the activities and experiences that you provide the children has to come from them rather than it being filling them up with the curriculum that they need to learn'. Rebecca feels passionate about children being able to learn indoors and outside and she values open-ended resources such as clay, blocks and sand.

Karen

Karen is in her forties. She was raised by her parents and has one sister. She describes her upbringing as working class and is the first person in her family to go to university. Her family was very supportive and she recalls the encouragement she still gets from them now 'they keep saying to me now, 'we're so proud of what you've achieved'. Her mother was at home while she was a child and growing up she had a close relationship with her and recalls the motherly love she received. She reflects on her mother having polio as a child and being sent away for convalescences for a number of years and wonders whether the love and affection she then gave her was due to missing out on being with her family as a child. Karen went to the local primary school and describes it as 'nice and friendly' and that the teachers were 'caring'. She enjoyed gymnastics and 'hands on practical things' and enjoyed maths. At 16, Karen left school. Her parents were keen for her to be happy and 'we never really got pushed into anything'. She got an administrative job at a local company, which she really enjoyed and stayed there for eight years. Karen got married and had two children and then began working as a teaching assistant in a secondary school for children with learning difficulties. She enjoyed her role and it was

suggested she should start a degree. At this time her children were starting to work towards their GCSE's and she felt she could be 'the perfect role model' and study alongside them. After finishing her degree in Education Studies, Karen went on to do her teacher training through the GTTP scheme. For one of her placements she went to a primary school and did her teaching practice in Year One. This was a big change, however it made her realise that she would like to teach in primary. After finishing her teacher training she got a job in a primary school teaching in a Reception class. This has been a positive move for her and she 'absolutely loves working in early years'. She feels being a mature student and a mother has helped her make positive relationships with the children and parents. Karen likes the family friendly feel of her school, commenting that it's like one big family and I think when you are working in a nice friendly family environment like this it reflects.' Karen feels she has had good support. Her mentor during her NQT year was 'really supportive', her teaching assistant 'amazing' and the Head's door, 'is always open'. She feels she is still learning and 'I'm open to advice'. When thinking about what is important she wants to make learning fun for the children. She enjoys creative activities and says, 'there's so many things that you can create out of a box....they can plan it and you can bring your literacy in, you can label it and then they can draw on it, they can write their names, they can add bits and pieces, they can do speaking and listening so I think the creative area, it brings an understanding of the world'. Karen is very aware of children's differences and that they all develop at different rates so wants to make sure all the children are enjoying their learning and doing their best. She feels it is important to boost their self-confidence and make them feel proud of what they've achieved. She uses different strategies to

support the children in their learning, for example using puppets to help children with speech delay. Karen feels it's important that she is keen and enthusiastic about her job and that her enthusiasm will rub off on the children.

Sophie

Sophie is in her thirties. She grew up with her parents and brothers and recalls a happy childhood. Her mother was a nurse but balanced her career and family life and Sophie remembers doing lots of things with her at home. She was very creative as a child and did lots of art and dancing. She didn't start school until she was 5, but feels that all the playing and time spent with her mother in her early years was incredibly important. She enjoyed school and was keen to learn. She recalls wanting to be a teacher from the age of 15. She did work experience in a school and loved it and was also influenced by the teachers she had at primary school who she found very inspiring. After finishing her A Levels she went to university to do a drama degree. Although at this stage she knew she wanted to train to be a teacher, she decided to do a degree first as she wanted to pursue a subject she enjoyed. She then did a PGCE specialising in ages 3 to 8. Sophie teaches in a state primary school, where she has taught since she qualified. She likes the school she teaches in and has been given new challenges and opportunities to progress her career. She has taught in Reception and Key Stage One, starting off in Year One, which she taught for two years and then moving to Reception six years ago. She recalls her move from Year one to Reception, 'I loved Year One so much, the age of the children is fantastic because they are just on the cusp of doing so many things and they're just getting that confidence with reading and writing which they start to get in Reception but

they have too much squished into the timetable, too much squished into the National Curriculum'. Sophie enjoys the ethos of early years and enjoys being able to work more holistically rather than teach specific subjects. She feels the early years curriculum is less prescriptive than the National Curriculum and reflects: 'I have that flexibility. If something takes the children by absolute....you know, they're fascinated by it or something fascinates me we can spend a week looking at it or two weeks or you know we can change, change our weeks around as actually we'll do that in two weeks' time because this, it's snowed. We have that flexibility that the other classes don't have'. When thinking about her pedagogy, she refers to the sign she has on her classroom door that says 'Play, explore, discover, learn'. She feels this sums up her approach 'I think that it is by playing you explore, and you discover new things and then you learn things. So that is really how I like to teach'.

Kelly

Kelly is in her twenties. She grew up with her parents and older brother. She spent a lot of her childhood playing with her cousin. She recalls mostly being left to her own devices as a child and enjoyed playing out on her bike or in her grandma's garden. Kelly went to the local primary school and recalls being very happy. She then spent some of her secondary education in Spain as her family had relocated there. She didn't feel she got a very good education at this time, but was determined to work hard and then came back to England to do her A levels and go to university to train to teach. She feels she probably thought about becoming a teacher when she was a teenager. The job appealed to her as she wanted to do something that was creative and she enjoyed working with children.

She completed an Early Years degree with QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) at university, but didn't teach straight away as she had her first child soon after finishing her degree. She feels the teaching placements during her degree were key to making her a good teacher. Having had a break before starting her teaching career, Kelly was nervous about starting teaching but has had good support from her friends who are teachers and from her NQT colleagues. Kelly has recently started her first teaching job in a Nursery class in a state infant school. She feels she is still finding her feet and working out how she wants to teach. She wants the children to enjoy coming to school and feels it's important that they feel valued and listened to. She thinks outdoor learning is important and wants the children to have the freedom to explore. She recalls enjoying playing outside and uses a mud pie to represent her belief in outdoor learning and also the importance of being allowed to get messy. She says 'I love seeing them outside like getting sort of messy...well obviously they've got to have boundaries because that's sort of part of the behaviour but I think I don't want to put any barriers really in their way and I just want them to kind of, you know, explore everything and as much as possible let them do what they want to do like with their playing and, you know, I don't want to have to keep telling them to get out of the puddles and....as long as they are covered up'.

This concludes the participant life histories. In the next three chapters, the findings from the study will be shared.

CHAPTER SIX:

Analysis of findings part one: The influence of childhood and family background on pedagogical beliefs

Introduction

In chapters six to eight the findings from this study are presented and analysed. The twelve participants generated twelve unique life histories and I have strived to keep the participants' voices at the forefront. Therefore, evidence from their narratives will be shared within these analysis chapters to support the findings of the study. Evidence from both interviews will be presented and whether the data are drawn from the first interview or the second interview will be indicated.

The structure of the findings chapters represents the salient themes that emerged during data analysis. The findings present the commonalities that exist across the women's stories, highlighting the aspects of their lives that have been most influential in forming their pedagogical beliefs. Presenting the findings chapters chronologically, is in keeping with a life history approach and also highlights the relationships between the different themes, such as how childhood experience impacts on mothering practices. Moving through the participants' lives from childhood to their current teaching job and exploring connections between their different experiences supports the social constructionist perspective of the study, as it highlights the complexity of participants' lives and how their historical and cultural backgrounds have influenced their pedagogical beliefs.

Chapter six examines the influence of childhood, family background and schooling on pedagogical beliefs. Chapter seven explores how the participants became early years teachers, looking at the influence of others, training and the role of mothering. This chapter specifically examines how gender has influenced the participants' pedagogy. Then finally, chapter eight shares how the participants' pedagogy has developed and explores some of the key pedagogical beliefs that the participants shared, particularly examining the commonalities that were evident in the participants' stories. This chapter will especially look the historical and contemporary context of early years education and how the teachers' pedagogical beliefs may have been influenced by wider contexts.

In the first of the findings chapters, I explore the influence of childhood and family background on the participants' pedagogical beliefs. The majority of the participants shared memories of their childhood and upbringing, and a number of participants continued this autobiographical theme in their second interview when they selected biographical objects as representations of their pedagogical beliefs. Through drawing upon the participants' narratives about their childhood and upbringing, I consider the influence and impact of childhood, family background and memory on their pedagogical beliefs. Through thematic analysis, salient themes emerged in connection to the participants' childhood, and this first section examines those themes with a particular focus on mothers and grandmothers, the influence of childhood activities and outdoor play and memories of school.

Evidence from the participants' narratives, indicated that early experiences of schooling and family life had clearly influenced their attitudes and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990) which had gone on to shape their pedagogical beliefs. How the participants were brought up, the activities and resources they had to play with, their interactions with their parents and grandparents and their own experience of schooling appear to have had a lasting influence and impact on their teaching and pedagogy. These early experiences had become internalised and had gone on to influence their pedagogy.

These early, lived experiences appear to be significant in the construction of the participants' pedagogical beliefs and indicate that the experiences that inform our pedagogy begin to develop in childhood (Raths, 2001). Alexander (2008) argues that pedagogy is multi-faceted and made up of different related domains of ideas and values including – self, society, past, culture, community, curriculum and children. The significance that the participants' placed on aspects of their childhood, when discussing their pedagogical beliefs, would suggest that the past is an important, influencing domain in pedagogical development.

Within the conversations about their past, many of the participants discussed the influence of their upbringing and memories of parents and grandparents, was shared, with particular reference to parenting practices. The majority of the participants discussed their mothers, with just Helen and Rebecca also making reference to their fathers. Some of the participants also recalled memories of grandparents and again, this was mostly of grandmothers except for Anne who discussed the influence of both her grandparents.

As the participants described their upbringing a particular image of their mothers and grandmothers emerged. The descriptions of many of the participants' mothers and grandmothers conjured up images of maternal and caring mothers, who dedicated themselves to their children and family life. For example, Sarah's mother paused her career as a community nursery nurse to stay at home and raise her three children. Sarah says:

She enjoyed it; she didn't want to rush back to work. She always wanted to be off with us and at home with us, and she always says 'oh I made sure you could all write your name before you went to play group' (Sarah, first interview).

The maternal image presented by many of the participants, resonated with the maternal characteristics often associated with women who teach in early years (McGillivray, 2008; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Steedman, 1985). The majority of the participants depicted mothers and grandmothers who provided a happy, active home life with activities such as cooking, sewing and playing outside. These images resonated with the historical images of Froebel's kindergarten, which replicated the 'motherly direction' seen in the home (Brehony, 2000). The maternal characteristics that many of the participants were exposed to during their childhood had influenced their gendered disposition (Bourdieu, 1990).

Ailwood (2008) suggests that the ideal maternal figure associated with teaching is of the 'good middle class mother'. Osgood (2012) argues that the characteristics of the white middle class mother have become the ideal image of the good mother but by normalising discourses of middle class mothering, not all mothers fit into this image. Women are not a homogenous group, and not all of the participants' mothers represented this more stereotypical image of

motherhood. For example, Anne's mother was a single mother so was not able to stay at home, but had to go back to work. Kelly could not recall much time spent with her own mother doing activities, but felt she was 'left to her own devices' during her childhood.

The participants family background had helped to construct their gender identities (Burr, 2003; Francis, 2009) and there was evidence in the participants' narratives that they had encountered and been influenced by certain femininities through their family and school life. The adult women in their childhood – mothers, grandmothers and teachers, had influenced their understanding of what it is to be female (Paechter, 2006; Scharff, 2013).

The following illustrations from the participants' life histories provide examples of the influence of family habitus and in particular maternal influence, and how this has impacted on the participants' pedagogical beliefs. This first section provides examples of how the family influences and gender experiences have shaped the participants' dispositions, and also gives examples of where the habitus has transformed and not been confined to the values of their childhood (Thomas, 2002).

Mothers and Grandmothers

The following illustrations from Jo, Karen and Sophie's life histories provide examples of the influence of family habitus and in particular a maternal influence and how this has impacted the participants' pedagogical beliefs. These

participants' experiences particularly highlight the key part historical roots play in the replication of family habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990) as it transposes from generation, to generation.

Jo's mother and grandmother played a key role in her narrative and she connected the way she was brought up by them, to how she now teaches. Jo articulated a clear continuity in parenting from her grandmother to her mother and then herself, providing a clear example of the durability of habitus across time (Bourdieu, 1990). She describes her grandmother as follows:

I just think she did a lot of listening and watching. And somehow she was just really good at saying the right thing at the right time without being, you know, how I would like to be able to talk to the children. We were given time and space to believe that we'd decided things for ourselves. Not over bearing and not dismissive, being really open... just absolutely brilliant and a hundred per cent supportive. I can see how my mum or my gran, you know would just quietly observe and gently support. And actually yeah the way that, I think especially my granny that must have gone through to my mum (Jo, first interview).

She recalls the way her grandmother was so positive and was really good at noticing and commenting on things she had done. It is these dispositions and values established from her childhood (Bourdieu, 1990) that she tries to recreate in the classroom - 'just someone to quietly notice the little things you know... when you think nobody's watching...recognise their individual bits'. Jo articulates a connection between her grandmother's parenting skills and her mother's and how this has influenced how she would like to be with the children she teaches. In discussing what she wants to provide for the children in her class, she feels it is important to notice the little things children do and see their individuality, as well as giving them time and space. This type of time and attention is something she experienced as a child and she connects this back to

her grandmother and hopes that she can be like her. Jo initially trained as a secondary art teacher and when she retrained in early years, it was recalling how she was raised that helped to give her the confidence to be 'instinctive' in her early years teaching. Jo's ability to be 'instinctive' in her teaching, suggests that she is able to move away from a technical approach and be more intuitive in her pedagogy (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). It is interesting that it is the experiences from her past that have helped her to be instinctive. She has embodied those values and dispositions acquired from her cultural history and these have influenced how she teaches (Webb et al., 2002).

Not only does Jo describe a connection between her background and past and her pedagogy but she also highlights a synergy between her pedagogy and the school she now teaches in. When Jo discusses her pedagogy, it appears that she is able to teach in the way she wants to, and is able to draw on experience from her background to support her teaching. The cultural norms and values of her school (Reay, 1989; Reay et al., 2001, 2009; Thomas, 2002) are in keeping with her personal habitus. The institutional habitus of Jo's school fits with her individual habitus, which is perhaps why she felt the school felt 'familiar' when she looked round. She comments that when she looked round the school, which is a converted barn in woodland, it reminded her of where she grew up on a farm.

Karen, like Jo had also been influenced by how she was brought up. She describes a secure childhood, with a supportive family, and she recalls the encouragement she still gets from them now. As she recalled in the interview: 'they keep saying to me now, we're so proud of what you've achieved'. She

explained that her mother was at home while she was a child ‘mum’s always been at home for us when we were being brought up. She didn’t go back to work until I was about 13,14’. Growing up she had a close relationship with her mother. She reflects on her mother having polio as a child and being sent away for convalescences for a number of years and wonders whether the love and affection she then gave her was due to missing out on being with her family as a child.

She’s really given us lots of love and affection and things because I think she’s felt she’s missed out, perhaps she’s over compensated with us, she’s always made sure we’ve always had what we wanted and never gone without and really had the motherly love (Karen, first interview).

The secure, supportive upbringing that Karen describes, appears to be defined by the ‘motherly love’ she received from her mother. These maternal dispositions have helped to shape Karen’s values (Bourdieu, 1990) and have gone on to influence her pedagogy. When Karen discusses her pedagogy, much of what is important to her is about the children feeling happy and secure. Some of the resources and experiences that are important to her are connected to supporting the children’s self esteem, developing their confidence or making them feel happy and proud of what they have achieved. For example when she brings objects to discuss in her second interview she chooses - a puppet to give them the confidence to speak and a display board that the children can use to share their photographs, drawing and writing: ‘things that they are really proud of that they want to share’. Karen sees the children as ‘her extended family’ and she comments on ‘the nice friendly family environment’ as one of the aspects of the school that particularly appeals to her. The family friendly values Karen’s school appeared to be in keeping with her own family values that were

established in her childhood (Reay, 1989; Reay et al., 2001, 2009; Thomas, 2002).

Sophie, similarly to Jo, saw a continuity of maternal influence through different generations of her family. Sophie's mother had a career as a nurse, which she saw very much as a vocation and this is how Sophie feels about teaching. Despite working, Sophie remembers her mother having lots of time for her as a child as she adapted her work so she could also be at home. She feels that her mother's upbringing influenced how she then went on to parent. At the time of interview, Sophie was expecting her first baby and she hoped that she would be able to continue the parenting values established in her family.

My granny just had time for her children because she did, you know, not everybody was in that position to have time in that way, but she had time to play with them in the garden and to make things with them. So that was my mum's experience so that's ... and she carried on. I hope that's what I can do (Sophie, first interview).

Sophie, Jo and Karen all describe being influenced by the values and dispositions established by the women in their families (Bourdieu, 1990). These established maternal characteristics are embedded and have been passed across generations (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990) and have helped to shape their maternal and professional pathways. These maternal characteristics influenced by their family habitus also have a synergy with the maternal characteristics often associated with women who teach young children and the image of the good mother, who is caring and responsive to her children. Therefore, their understanding of good maternal practices is also being reinforced by the socially constructed image of the good mother (Ailwood, 2008; Burr 2003).

The examples above demonstrate how the values and dispositions acquired in childhood can be replicated later on and how they can influence pedagogical formation. However, the nature of habitus is that it is not fixed, but can evolve (Maton, 2012; Thomas, 2002). An illustration of the possibility to transform ones habitus is provided with examples from Kate and Rebecca's stories. Although like the previous stories, they had been influenced by their upbringing, they did not chose to replicate the same values from their past.

Kate did not want to continue the parenting values passed on to her but actively sought to break this cycle and restructure the values from her childhood. Kate describes a more formal upbringing that was lacking in physical and emotional warmth. She says:

I think you know yet again you can unpick lives, you know both my parents yes sort of had privileged upbringings but yet again emotionally devoid, they weren't sort of you know, I wouldn't say their childhoods were necessarily happy, and I think that's another thing, for me which has impacted on both my parenting and my teaching is the fact that you've got to break the mould, you know, and I think that's easier said than done for some people because they can't break the mould because they could become part of it, it could become their sort of the way they are, but for some people they can stand back and reflect and think actually no that's not appropriate, not the way I want to do it for X, Y and Z reasons so I would say the way I am as a person with children refers back directly to how my parents brought me up but how they were brought up themselves as well...that's why for my children and the children here I just think it's so important for them to be totally enveloped in love you know totally unconditional....when I had the girls it was the way I always felt a parent should be and could actually be that parent and I suppose from doing that and getting the feedback from them and the relationship I had with them was you know enough to make me think yes I do understand (Kate, first interview).

She feels she has reflected on her childhood and schooling experiences and has actively tried to 'break the mould'. A key part of her pedagogy is developing the

children's personal, social and emotional development 'wanting to protect them and do the best for them and you know make them feel so emotionally secure and have such a positive self-esteem'. She feels she has a good understanding of child development and feels it is her responsibility to 'change what I'm doing for the child rather than expect the child to change' in order to support their social and emotional development.

Interestingly, Kate uses the term 'break the mould', to emphasise her conscious decision to restructure the values and dispositions that influenced her childhood (Bourdieu, 1990). As Maton (2012) argues, habitus is not immutable and can restructure over time. As Kate discusses her life, there are key experiences that have possibly contributed towards her being able to restructure her habitus. When training she had positive experiences in her placement schools and had 'lovely schools, very friendly, very warm and very supportive staff'. When she became a mother, she felt she could parent in the way she wanted to. She feels she 'innately' knew how children learnt and what the best environment was for them and through being able to explore this in her teaching and then getting the positive feedback from the children who are happy and progressing has confirmed this for her.

Rebecca also had strong childhood memories and she too recalls a more formal, restrictive upbringing. Her father was a teacher but she describes him as 'old fashioned' and that he expected children to do what they were told.

I had a really quite a closed childhood in a way 'cause I was one of... my mum had three sons and one of them died. And I came along afterwards and so I was so protected. I wasn't allowed to play out in the street, you know, kids used to play in the streets. I wasn't allowed to play in the

streets, I wasn't allowed on any kind of dangerous climbing equipment, I wasn't allowed to do this that and the other. My dad was quite formal, you know, if ever you asked, you were given an instruction and expected to follow it, you couldn't question why. There was no reasoning, there was no negotiating. It was you do it because I'm the adult and you're the child. I can remember feeling so frustrated (Rebecca, first interview).

These strong feelings Rebecca felt as a child, have lasted and appear to have gone on to shape her pedagogical thinking. When discussing her pedagogical beliefs, she recalls how she felt as a child and how she now feels strongly that children should be able to ask questions and negotiate.

We're the adults and ultimately we do have the responsibility but there should be a balance between children... they should be able to ask 'well actually why should I sit on the carpet for story time if I don't want to' and be able to have that conversation that actually we all need to do this because it's part of the day, and... but not to be told 'because I'm the adult and you're child'...to think of children as being capable of understanding those things and reasoning (Rebecca, first interview).

Rebecca also cites the influence of her first job, describing her head teacher as 'inspirational' and the philosophy of the school that was very much about the child leading the learning and being able to negotiate and ask questions. This approach appears to be the opposite of her childhood experience, which is perhaps why it has such an impact on Rebecca. This experience as well as reflecting on her own schooling and upbringing, appears to have had a key impact on forming her pedagogical beliefs.

Evidence from the narratives shared above, shows how family values can be reproduced and that the past experiences of these participants' had an impact on their pedagogy. The narratives also show how values can be changed over time and that other factors can also be influential. Some of the participants were influenced by the maternal values established in their childhoods, and this

maternal image was also evident when the participants recollected their memories of play and activities they had engaged with as children.

Memories of play

As well as discussing how their mothers and grandmothers raised them, the majority of the participants discussed and recalled the activities and experiences they participated in as children. In a number of cases their mothers, fathers and grandparents played a key role in these memories too. The participants particularly talked about activities they did, resources they had to play with and their memories of outdoor play. The participants talked in depth about the resources children should access and the type of experiences and activities they should be exposed to and this formed a significant part of their pedagogy. Again, there were links between their past experiences in childhood and their teaching, with their childhood memories being used as an important reference point for shaping their pedagogical beliefs.

As with the examples shared above, the play memories that some of the participants recalled, also featured a certain maternal image. The mother that was described was responsive and sensitive and resonated with characteristics of the ‘good middle class mother’ (Ailwood, 2008; Osgood, 2010).

Sarah’s mother was at home while her and her brothers were young. Her mother was a nursery nurse and she feels this may have influenced her parenting style and all the activities she provided for them when they were young.

We were always making tents in the living room or having picnics outside. In the garden, we had a sandpit and I remember...and dressing up, dressing up in Mum's clothes, dressing up as a bride. She did loads with us, loads of drawing, loads of writing, I drew, I drew all the time. Paper everywhere...she was never worried about getting paint and stuff out with us at home. Yeah not worried about the garden looking in a state (Sarah, first interview).

Sarah describes an active, child centred upbringing. Having the opportunity to access lots of different activities and make a mess suggests that the children's learning and development were the central concern of Sarah's mother. Sarah appears to want to replicate aspects of her upbringing in her classroom. When thinking about what she wants for the children in her class, she's not 'worried about them making a mess' and wants them to enjoy activities such as dressing up and playing outside. She says:

You've come in, you know, with energy and ideas and you know you'll take them, you know 'take them to the shops', 'get them cooking'... how can I make it real and fun and the sorts of things that they will leave and remember – 'oh I remember doing this at school...' (Sarah, first interview).

Her description of how she feels she should be as a teacher – energetic, fun, providing a range of activities and lasting memories, very much echoes her upbringing and the characteristics of her mother.

Anne spent a lot of time with her grandparents when she was growing up, as her mother was at work. It was the play experiences that she experienced with them which appear to hold significant memories. Anne describes the influence of her grandparents and there is evidence of a continuity of influence from her childhood that now impacts on her pedagogy. She describes a happy childhood, where she spent a lot of time at her grandparents' house. She remembers practical, home based activities such as sewing, baking, spending time in the greenhouse and doing woodwork with her granddad. She feels it is important for children to

have access to these ‘real’ activities. She recalls enjoying learning practically when she was young, describing herself as someone who learns by ‘doing’. When discussing her pedagogy, she believes it is important that the children have risk and challenge, this is something she wanted for her own children and for the children she now teaches and she connects this back to her childhood memories.

The whole risk taking thing... I used to spend a lot of time with my granddad, in my granddad’s shed. And there were boxes of nails and screws...and my son, when he was little, he had a proper saw and a proper hammer. I think it’s something that I feel quite strongly about. You know, point out the risks and see what they can do to lessen the risks for themselves. When they’re on the woodwork bench, if they stick the nail in their finger, well next time they’ll move their finger (Anne, first interview).

When Anne selects objects to represent her pedagogical beliefs for her second interview, the theme of risk taking is evident, as is the connection to her childhood and she brings objects with her that have a biographical connection. She selects a photograph of the woodwork bench in her current setting and her grandmother’s sewing basket. For her, woodwork represents not only risk and challenge but also ‘real’ activities and these activities were clearly an important part of her childhood.

I don’t want it to be plastic all the time and I want the children to have real experiences that one day they can look back on and actually think that was the start of developing life skills.... if I think of going into my grandparents’ house you know it wasn’t like in these days where grandparents look after the children all the time so there’s always the toy box and everything...when I used to go to my nan’s there wasn’t anything like that and we used to go in the greenhouse and we used to plant seeds and we used to go with my granddad and the woodwork and we’d have the sewing box out or we’d go baking (Anne, second interview).

The sewing basket also highlights the importance of ‘real’ experiences and Anne recalls childhood memories of exploring her grandmother’s button box and the ‘excitement and intrigue’ this created. She now provides little boxes of objects for the children in her class to explore and feels this is also connected to trusting

them, not only with small objects but also with things that are not necessarily 'toys'. She says:

Cause so many times (you say to) children 'no you can't have that' ... 'Oh be careful with that' you know whereas I do have little glass things that I will let them hold and look at and turn and feel (Anne, second interview).

The dispositions that Anne has inherited from her childhood that promote practical learning have helped to shape her pedagogical beliefs. She is also able to provide these 'real' activities and experiences at her school and teach in the way she believes. She sees a connection with her beliefs and the school's philosophy and how the two are in agreement (Reay et al., 2001), when she states, 'I think this is part of the way we are here but it's very much the part which suits me which is probably why I like being here'.

Jo, like Anne uses biographical objects to represent her pedagogical beliefs. In fact all of the objects she brings to the interview are connected to her past. As she saw continuity in how she was brought up as a child, she also sees a clear link between the resources and experiences she had as a child, and the resources and experiences she wants the children in her class to engage with. She too echoes Anne's belief that children do not necessarily need toys to play with and recalls the resources from her childhood.

I've learnt from being here, and then reflecting about my own children and what I've done with them and my childhood, lots of simple resources that aren't you know the plastic fire engine can only be a plastic fire engine. I look back at, you know, see what my children are playing at my Mum's house, and there's lots of pegs or simple shapes, shapes in tins. And I always used to go 'well I just love the toys at Granny's house' (Jo, first interview).

The memories of playing with simple toys and resources as a child has made her carefully consider the resources she provides in her setting. When reflecting on what she wants the children she teaches to have access to, she says:

I'd always say a variety of scale, so you can do small and you can do large. I do love the outside blocks....being able to play on those scales, and multiples, they love multiples of...it could be anything... it could be multiples books or cotton reels, you know.... logs (Jo, first interview).

Jo reflects on how she went about choosing the objects to bring to her second interview and she describes the significance of a collection of bags she has brought to represent her interest in 'multiples'.

First of all after I'd started looking for things and then thought oh I need to get a bag so I went to get a bag and then realised that I have hundreds, this is only a selection, it's not about what the bags are but just that I have collections and collections of things to go 'Oh we're doing that, oh I've got some of those', so that's an illustration of the piles of multiples of resources, multiple, multiple bags, and then these, which are bags. These are from my childhood that my mum kept.... (Jo, second interview).

Jo highlights the importance of these resources and the ability to bring in 'stuff' from home to inspire and engage the children. She acknowledges the positive connection between home and school and this appears to be an important part of her pedagogy, 'I collect loads and loads of things in my life and this (school) has been a brilliant outlet for it'. She articulates this connection to home, her past and her current job.

I think for me at the moment this is perfect because it's allowing me to make all those connections and use all of the things that I surround myself with, not you know not just stuff but I'm still you know physically live really close to my family, I'm still grounded in the same space that I grew up in and all those sorts of things I think help. I don't know, not just help, that's just part of me, and that's not really any different here to me being at home. It's a similar environment, it's similar resources and whether I've shaped it to be that in the last three years or whether it was similar when I came, I don't know (Jo, first interview).

Jo expresses the blurring of her personal and professional lives and how she feels the two are intertwined. She acknowledges the synergy between her family

habitus and that of her schools and how she is able to replicate her own values within her professional setting (Reay et al., 2001).

Helen describes a happy childhood, growing up in a village and church community. Her father plays a key role in her childhood memories and interestingly, apart from Rebecca, she is the only participant who talked in depth about their father. When she brings her objects to discuss at her second interview two have biographical connections – her recorder and some photographs her father took. These both relate to the importance she places on creativity, but also connect to her father's influence. Her father, who played the piano and was the choirmaster for the church, influenced the musical upbringing she had as a child. She values music and brings this into her teaching.

I have musical instruments all round the place and, and every area if I can, every role play area, I will have musical instruments in there and try and add as much as we can, lots of singing (Helen, first interview).

She brings a recorder to her second interview as an object to represent her pedagogy. This symbolises the importance she places on music and also has strong childhood connections. She recalls that as a teenager she went to teach recorder at a local school and this experience impacted on her decision to teach.

I used to go along and sit in this room and try and teach a few children to play the recorder. So I think I must have, you know, it's such a long time ago now and it's such a vague memory really but I must have really enjoyed doing that and right through college the music just sort of was a thread through all that and now as well it's we have instruments everywhere (Helen, second interview).

Helen also shares a memory of spending time with her father developing photographs, and although his creative talents have impacted on her, she feels it's more than just this.

He used to take us up into the loft and show us how to make photographs and actually just ... I used to love it, we used to have to put them under the enlarger and sort of shine the light through onto the photographic paper and then you used to have to put it into the developer, in this solution, you weren't allowed, it was quite scary and you had to be really careful and use tongs 'cause you weren't allowed to touch it and actually just watching that appear, it was as if by magic, you know this photographic paper, you used to stand and watch the photograph then you had to put it in the fixer and dry them and when I look back now looking at some of the photographs, he had no training, it was just a hobby and he just liked ... he was very quiet. He died when I was quite young, I was 21, 20, but looking back now he was just such a kind, gentle, smiley kind of man and he just had a lot of time for us and patience and I think that's, that has impacted, so I'm sort of talking about two things, that kindness and that gentleness and just that nurturing I think perhaps has had an impact on me, but also his creativity as well I think (Helen, second interview).

The dispositions and values that Helen's father instilled in her have had a lasting impact (Bourdieu, 1990). He has shaped her passion for music and creativity but also some of his personal characteristics have also influenced her. Helen highlights his gentle nurturing side. Nurturing and caring characteristics are often associated with mothering, however in Vogt's (2002) study male teachers also saw caring as an important part of their role. Vogt argues that caring should be understood in different ways, with maternal caring as just one possible definition. Helen's understanding of nurturing and caring has been shaped by a paternal influence.

Helen, Jo and Anne clearly articulate the importance of their childhood experiences and how these continue to impact on their teaching. To reinforce this link with the past, they interestingly all chose objects with a biographical significance to represent their pedagogical beliefs. These objects, which are symbolic of their past and a representation of their childhood, now provide an opportunity to support them in the articulation of their pedagogical beliefs,

linking their past and their present. This echoes Bourdieu's emphasis on the historical roots of habitus but also its ability to impact on the present, when he states 'a past that survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles' (1977:82). Helen, Jo and Anne can continue to perpetuate their pedagogical principles in their settings as the principles of their setting resonate with their personal beliefs. Not only is the connection between the past and present significant here, but also the connection between the personal and the professional, which supports the view that teachers personal lives are closely linked to their professional lives. The examples from Helen, Jo and Anne's narratives, support what Nias (1989) suggests when she argues that, teaching is a personal activity, as in so many ways the personal and professional boundaries are blurred. One area that she highlights is the ability to bring hobbies and interests into the workplace. Helen, Jo and Anne are all able to pursue their interests in woodwork, music and resources in their professional life.

Outdoor memories

Alongside, recalling memories of resources and activities, for many of the participants, positive memories of outdoor play were discussed and this emerged as a significant theme within the participants' childhood recollections. Research into adult memories of play highlight outdoor memories as being some of the most prevalent (Henniger, 1994; Waite, 2007). Memories ranged from the type of activities enjoyed outside such as gardening and having picnics, to the joy of

being allowed to get messy, make mud pies and splash in puddles, to also the sense of freedom that being outdoors provides.

Helen recalls having lots of freedom to go outside and play.

I had a lovely childhood, a lot of freedom and you know to go out over the fields and play out with my friends (Helen, first interview).

Helen regards outdoor learning with high importance and has been keen to develop the outdoor area at her school. For her MA dissertation she focused on improving and developing the outdoor space and involved the children in the design process. She wanted to replicate that sense of outdoor freedom she experienced as a child, for the children she now teaches, and feels that their opportunities are different to the ones she had when she was younger.

Mary too recalls outdoor freedom as a child.

I spent hours in the garden with buckets of sand and water and mud...she (Mother) didn't mind at all and we had a big garden. My grandmother actually lived next door and we planted things and made a mess and it was quite, when I say relaxed you still had to do things but mostly I spent all the time outside (Mary, first interview).

Outdoor learning has remained important to her, and she brings her Wellington boots to her second interview as a representation of the importance she places on outdoor learning.

We go out every week on a Welly walk around the school grounds. I always like working outside...Welly walks have been terrific and we're very blessed around here because you can actually go all the way around and there's a little wood just up in the corner (Mary, second interview).

Kelly does not have strong childhood memories. She describes her childhood as happy but does not recall spending time doing things with her parents. However, her strongest memory is of playing outdoors.

It was my cousin that I always remember making potions with, round my nan's house and, you know, pretending we were witches and things so and I remember digging for treasure like in her flower beds.... we were always outside, and I was always going to the park on my bike, and on my skates with my friends (Kelly, first interview).

Recalling her memories of making mud pies as a child, Kelly brings a mud pie to represent her belief that children should get messy and not have too many boundaries. She wants them to be able to get dirty and splash in puddles if they want to. Sophie also recalls having the freedom to be messy when she was a child.

We played outside a lot, a lot, and I was allowed to get messy and you know things I remember most, I was allowed to be messy, I was allowed to splash in puddles (Sophie, first interview).

Jo reflects on why outdoor memories are often so significant. In a recent conversation with her mother about her childhood, she recalls her mum saying:

Well your sister and you might have rose tinted ideas of what you were like just because we had the outside space she said you weren't out there all the time (Jo, second interview).

However, Jo feels what is significant is how strong the memory is 'we can each pick out a story of building an amazing den at the back of the pond.' She also feels it was important because:

It wasn't restricted and there wasn't adults there you know that's the bit, there weren't any adults there and I don't live in a 1950s ideal of 'we used to go out after breakfast and come back for tea', definitely not but there were definitely times that nobody was watching you and you did say 'OK I'll see you later on' (Jo, second interview).

Kate echoes Jo's point when she recalls her main memory of primary school:

I do remember we were quite fortunate because the playground had a wood and there weren't high fences, we used to climb over the fence and go play on the little woods it was just a ditch and that was a...goes back to sort of what childhood memories if you can actually think a lot of them were where you were actually outside you know that was play time (Kate, first interview).

These memories of outdoor play in childhood seem particularly significant. Perhaps the sense of freedom and the chance to be away from adults is what has left a lasting impression. This would concur with Waite's (2007) study that suggested that memories connected to a positive emotion can produce stronger memories. The significance of these childhood memories, offers support for the argument that our belief structures are being developed in childhood (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992) and these beliefs will go on to impact our classroom practice. In the case of the participants discussed above, the positive outdoor experiences they had as children appear to be connected to the value they now place on outdoor experiences as teachers. Rath (2001) also argues the need to acknowledge that teachers have been forming their pedagogical beliefs since being at school themselves, and it is memories of schooling that I will examine next.

Memories of School

As well as evidence within the participants' childhood memories of influences directly from their family backgrounds, there was also evidence of wider influences from the schools they had attended. During the life history interviews the participants were asked about their memories and experiences of school. Some participants just made a fleeting reference to their schooling, for example Emily, who did not recall any strong memories of school but 'liked it and got on with it'. Other participants recalled more detailed memories that were both positive and negative.

Although asked about their schooling as a whole, most of the participants discussed their primary schooling in more detail. It was also the participants' experiences of primary school that were more positive. Kelly, Sarah, Anne and Jo had very positive primary school experiences. Sarah had 'a lovely time at primary', Jo recalls primary school being 'good fun', Kelly 'loved primary school' and Anne was 'very happy'. When recalling aspects of primary school, the participants did not recall much about the academic side of school, but more about the social and emotional side. The words the participants used to describe their primary school experience, such as 'nice, caring, friendly, relaxed, fun' and the fact they 'loved' school, conjures up a very positive image. Schools, like families produce their own set of values and cultural norms and these produce the institutional habitus of the setting (Reay et al., 2001; 2009). The caring and emotional dispositions associated with teaching young children, may well have influenced the culture of primary schools. Braun (2012) argues that social fields such as teaching construct their own culture. The culture of primary schools may encourage the teachers to position themselves with certain idealised and realised dispositions that become part of their occupational identity. With the characteristics of teachers of younger children, aligned with caring and nurturing roles (Hauver-James, 2010), then it is perhaps not surprising that the participants experienced this caring culture within their primary schools.

Mary and Sophie also had positive primary school experiences. Evidence in their narratives shows a synergy between their home and school cultures. Both Sophie and Mary recalled a love of learning and an eagerness to go to school and do

well. They both described a home culture that encouraged learning and saw school as a positive experience. Mary says:

My mum and dad were not pushy but always concerned, involved... they were very encouraging really, there was the expectation that you know that you would do your best. My mum and dad didn't mind what you achieved but you had to try, do your best. They were very keen on education, they, had it not been for the need to go out to work and earn money they would've stayed on at school (Mary, first interview).

The encouragement and high regard for education from home impacted on Mary, who 'loved school and liked learning'. Despite going to a 'rough' primary school she did well and was one of two children from her year to pass the 11 plus exam go onto the grammar school. Bourdieu suggests that institutions such as schools are environments where dominant groups can reproduce themselves (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Grammar schools, which had an emphasis on high academic achievement, were often environments that excluded children from working class backgrounds. However, the educational aspirations that Mary's parents had for her, despite not staying on at school themselves, and the educationally supportive culture of home and school meant that Mary was successful at Grammar school. Mary feels that she has continued this passion for learning during her life and during her time as a teacher has continued to learn and develop her teaching.

The family disposition during Sophie's upbringing also focused on educational achievement. Sophie was encouraged to see academic success as positive.

My mum had always done stuff with me at home and I could already read before I went to school, she was very positive about school (Sophie, first interview).

Sophie also recalled loving school and enjoying being challenged. She very much wanted the children in her class to have a similar experience and felt

strongly that all children should have a ‘positive experience’ and that it was important that they ‘felt safe and had fun’. The love of learning instilled in her as a child, coupled with a positive school experience has helped to shape her pedagogy.

Not all of the participants had positive school experiences and wanted to replicate in their teaching, the values they experienced at school. Evidence from Rebecca and Kate’s narratives provide examples of how they have chosen to teach in ways that are different to their own schooling experiences.

Rebecca recollected both positive and negative experiences at primary school and considers whether these two distinct experiences have had an influence on her pedagogy.

I think in a way possibly the latter part (of her primary education) made me more inclined to wanting to work somewhere that children were able to have more freedom and autonomy over their learning, ‘cause I went from quite... it wasn’t you know, by no means a progressive school but there was a vast difference between my first school and going to a church school which was a lot more rigid and we had regular times tables tests and I don’t know, I mean I can’t ever remember thinking ‘oh this isn’t the right way I should be learning’, but...I can’t help but wonder if that did influence, because I’m so the other way from that now...(Rebecca, first interview).

As discussed at the earlier part of this chapter, Rebecca recalls a more formal and restrictive upbringing at home, which made her feel frustrated. Her reflection above suggests a similar frustration at the experience of more formal schooling and acknowledges that in her teaching she has moved away from this approach and wants to provide freedom and autonomy for the children in her class.

Kate's school experiences also appear to replicate her more formal experiences at home. She attended an independent girls school and says:

Incredibly formal...we wore the school uniform we wore pin stripe blazers, it was ties, it was boaters in the summer, we were described as young ladies, we were expected to sit... it was sitting at desks, what was regarded as informal was our needlework lessons and our art lessons and our cookery lessons but it was, incredibly dry, incredibly chalk and talk...obviously I made progress didn't I, I got my 'O' levels but there was nothing about loving learning, it was being compliant enough to respond to what you were taught rather than developing an independent love of learning and I think that's it, independence is really key to me because I think I lacked a lot of independence in both my personal life but also my education (Kate, first interview).

Although the more formal approach of Kate's home and school life are similar, this is not a culture that she feels comfortable with. In the same way that she did not want to replicate certain family values, Kate actively chose not to replicate the formal characteristics of her schooling (Thomas, 2002). The social and emotional aspects of her development that she feels were lacking during her upbringing are now the aspects of learning that she places an emphasis on in her classroom.

Anne described in detail the transition from primary to secondary school and the differing cultures of the two school environments and how this was a shock to her. Anne attended a small community primary school, where she was very happy. She remembers it as being 'fun' and recalls more practical experiences such as painting and doing sport. This friendly, practical atmosphere seems to resonate with her upbringing, which was full of practical activities and family time. Her transition to secondary school then came as a shock. She passed her 11 plus exam and went to the girls Grammar school, which was much more formal. She describes the head teacher as 'austere' and the expectation was to go onto

university. During the sixth form she decided she wanted to take a more practical route and join the fire service. She received little support for her decision and eventually left school before finishing her A levels. The more formal, academic culture of Anne's secondary school does not appear to fit with the more relaxed, practical experiences in her earlier childhood. Anne recalls that coming from a working class background, the expectation for her was to go and get a job when she left school, not go to university. Anne's experience of secondary school supports the research of Reay et al. (2001; 2009) and Thomas (2002) who highlighted the effect of institutional habitus on students' access and choice in higher education. These studies demonstrated how class, gender and race can interact with the institutional habitus and impact on the students' education choices with students from dominant groups (e.g. white, middle class) achieving more success. The different values and expectations between Anne's background and the institutional habitus of her grammar school meant that it was difficult for her to follow schools favoured academic path (Thomas, 2002).

Anne places a high value on practical learning in her classroom, which has been influenced from her upbringing and primary school experience. A more formal approach to learning does not appear to sit comfortably with her pedagogical beliefs. For example, when recalling a 'formal' placement when training to be a teacher, she says she 'couldn't help but slip in some fun'. Through her early years pedagogy she appears to be able to instil some of the values established from her background.

Summary

The focus of this chapter was to examine how the participants' childhood experiences and family background had influenced the formation of their pedagogical beliefs. Drawing on Bourdieu's conceptual tool of habitus to support analysis, was beneficial in highlighting the influence of the participants' familial habitus on the formation of their pedagogical beliefs and also the connection between the past and present and the significance of the historical roots of habitus and how it manifests itself in the present (Bourdieu, 1977).

Childhood experiences and family background was a key feature in most of the participants' narratives. Two areas that were particularly discussed were upbringing and influence of mothers and grandmothers and the activities and resources that were provided for them to play with. When the participants discussed their pedagogical beliefs, connections and influence from their past was evident. Participants were keen to replicate many of the activities, resources and experiences they had encountered as children within their teaching. As they described their pedagogy there was a resonance with the descriptions of their childhood. This was also true when upbringing and interactions with parents was discussed. In some cases, such as Jo's narrative, the maternal values that she described had influenced three generations. Thus, showing the impact of the past on pedagogical beliefs and also the ability of the familial habitus to manifest itself in the present (Webb et al., 2002). The relevance of the participants' personal biographies was also reinforced with some of the objects they chose to represent their pedagogical beliefs, as a number of these had biographical relevance. The objects gave some of the participants a further opportunity to

explore memories of childhood and engage in pedagogical reflection. This added further insight into their pedagogical beliefs provided another opportunity to examine the influence of the past on pedagogy.

Highlighting the relevance of the participants' childhoods and backgrounds, not only emphasised the significance of the past on the formation of pedagogical beliefs but also the interrelatedness of the participants' personal and professional lives. Through understanding aspects of the participants' personal lives by exploring their backgrounds and histories, provided a greater understanding of who they are in their professional lives.

There were also examples from some participants, who did not replicate their childhood experiences in their pedagogy. Although their past had had an impact on shaping their pedagogy, it had impacted in that they had actively chosen a different path to the one experienced in their childhoods. This suggested that the values from childhood can be changed and that other factors can also have a lasting impact on pedagogical formation. This supports the idea that habitus can be transformed (Thomas, 2002) and also indicates that pedagogical beliefs are influenced by a range of factors, not just experiences from the past (Alexander, 2008; Leach & Moon, 2008).

Mothers and Grandmothers played a key role in the participants' memories, which suggested evidence of a maternal influence on the participants' pedagogical beliefs. Aspects of the participants' gender identity was influenced by their habitus, as their early experiences and interactions with their mothers,

helped to establish ways of thinking and being associated with being female (Reay, 2004). Most of the mothers and grandmothers that were described, presented a maternal image of a 'particular mother', which resonated with the maternal image often associated with early years teachers, which is based on the ideal maternal figure of the white middle class mother (Ailwood, 2008; Osgood, 2012). For the participants that did not have this type of maternal upbringing, it was still the characteristics of the 'good mother' that they wanted to instil in their classroom. These maternal characteristics also appeared to be evident in the schools some of the participants attended, with particularly the primary schools embracing a caring and nurturing culture.

The next chapter will continue to explore how the participants' pedagogical beliefs have been shaped by maternal characteristics, as well as other aspects of their gendered identity.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Analysis of findings part two: Becoming an early years teacher

Introduction

This chapter particularly addresses research question two – How does the participants' gender identity influence the formation of their pedagogical beliefs?

In this chapter I explore how the participants became early years teachers. I consider evidence in the narratives that influenced why and how the participants became early years teachers, looking particularly at training, the influence of female relatives and female teachers, and becoming mothers. The participants took a range of different routes into teaching, some training straight from school whilst others trained as mature students. All of the participants at interview identified themselves as early years teachers, however, they did not all initially start off teaching in the early years. Seven of the participants – Jo, Helen, Sarah, Kate, Mary, Sophie and Emily had all taught older children. Out of the twelve participants, nine were mothers and one was expecting a baby. For four of these participants, it was becoming a mother that directly influenced their decision to teach and what particularly drew them to teaching in the early years. It appeared that becoming a mother had had a significant impact on their pedagogy and also their decision to teach in early years.

There was evidence within the participants' stories that suggested that the gendered socialisation from their early social contexts and the feminisation of

early years teaching had impacted on their decision to teach and had influenced their pedagogy. Their reasons for entering the teaching profession were very much linked to the caring and social aspects associated with teaching young children (Ailwood, 2008), for example ‘loving children and wanting to help others’. The dominant discourses of femininity that construct female teachers as being emotional and caring had helped to shape the participants’ understanding of their professional role (Burr, 2003). They also cited the influence of other women in their lives, such as female relatives and female teachers, and again the descriptions of these women also suggested a more feminised influence. The last section of this chapter looks particularly at how the maternal identity of a number of the participants framed their pedagogical beliefs and led them to enact caring and mothering roles (McGillivray, 2008; Osgood, 2012; Smedley, 1994; Smulyan, 2004) within their classrooms. However, within these narratives, there were also examples of personal agency, particularly with reference to the participants who trained after motherhood, as through training to be teachers they gained a profession and career progression.

Deciding to teach

Grace, Helen, Sarah, Kate, Kelly and Sophie all trained to be teachers after leaving school. Helen, Kate and Kelly all completed a BEd degree, with the others doing a degree first and then a PGCE. However, they stated it was always their intention to go into teaching but they wanted to pursue a different subject first.

Four of the participants – Sophie, Anne, Sarah and Grace cited the influence of female teachers and female relatives on their decisions to become teachers. Sophie, Anne and Sarah describe memorable primary school teachers. Sophie recalled one particular teacher who had influenced her, who she described as ‘fantastic, calm and creative’. Sarah, similarly recalls her reception class teacher as being ‘calm, relaxing and lovely’. Anne also had fond memories of her primary PE (physical education) teacher, who she remembers laughing a lot ‘which was very appealing’. The dispositions that the participants recall about their teachers are linked to their social and emotional characteristics rather than intellectual ones which is perhaps not surprising as women who teach young children have come to be described in ways that focus much more on their caring and nurturing characteristics (Skelton & Francis, 2009; Smulyan, 2004).

Grace and Sophie decided to become teachers at a young age and both highlight work experience as teenagers being influential, but also female relatives. In Grace’s case, her grandmother and aunt were teachers and were important role models. She recalls her grandmother:

She would get up every day and absolutely love her job and she loved her kids and she loved everything about teaching so that was in my background and my aunty was a teacher (Grace, first interview).

Grace remembers doing work experience at the age of fifteen and thinking ‘yeah of course, it’s going to be teaching isn’t it’. After completing her degree, she also says she started to ‘get broody’ and felt teaching would suit being a mother. The environment that Grace has grown up in appears to have shaped her career choice. Observing two influential female relatives having teaching careers provided Grace with examples of how teaching and domestic life can be

successfully balanced (Hauver-James, 2010; Thomson & Kehily, 2011). Her grandmother's passion for her job also provided Grace with a very positive example of how teaching fits around family life. Symulan (2004) highlights how social norms and discourses of femininity help to shape women's career decisions. In Grace's case, the teaching profession, which has been shaped by femininity, provides her with a job where she can fulfil her maternal aims.

Sophie's mother was a nurse, which like teaching is often viewed as a caring profession (Braun, 2012). Sophie was influenced by her mothers' job and wanted to also have 'a vocation'. She was also inspired by some of her primary school teachers.

I did my work experience at school and I thought I wanted to be a teacher but I absolutely loved the week in school and so really since then. It was mostly because I had two fantastic teachers when I was at school myself, specifically in primary school, one of them Mrs Russell, who was just fantastic, so creative and everything, and I loved the fact that we could learn about things that she found interesting (Sophie, first interview).

Both Grace and Sophie, although from different generations have grown up with female relatives who have successfully balanced family and work life, but who have had professions that are traditionally seen as 'female' jobs and which have strong associations with caring roles (McGillivray, 2008). Their respect for their female relatives and the positive role models that they present in their lives has influenced their decision to teach. Their early experiences and understanding of aspects of their gendered identity have guided their actions and behaviour and predisposed them towards a teaching career (Bourdieu, 1977).

In Helen's and Kate's stories there was evidence of the feminised aspects of teaching as being one of the reasons that drew them towards the profession.

When Helen talks about how she ended up training to teach, there appears to be a number of influences. As a teenager she enjoyed spending time with young children. She recalls:

A family moved in next door and the lady was a teacher and they had a baby and I used to come home from school every day and she was so patient 'cause I must have been about 11 or 12 and I'd just go straight next door to go and feed him, just spend time... But I used to, there's always this connection with small children, and when I used to go, when my sister and I had to go babysitting I remember there was a really difficult family up the road with these two children. She used to hate going there and I never used to understand it 'cause I used to love going there and didn't have a problem with them. My mum had had a playgroup when I was sort of in my teens; I'd always gone along and helped out when I was about ten or eleven when she started doing that (Helen, first interview).

When she was deciding what to do after school she says:

I didn't want to go to university. I think at, at that stage, probably in the late 70s I think only posh people went to university, I didn't feel clever enough or posh enough to go (Helen, first interview).

Helen ended up training at a teacher training college, connected to a university. It is interesting that she felt that she was not clever enough to go to university, but did feel able to attend teacher training college, thus aligning herself with the gendered stereotype of teaching being intellectually undemanding (Braun, 2012; Smulyn, 2009). Experiences in her childhood, such as caring for children as a teenager and observing her mother run a playgroup, helped to reinforce her desire to teach. These experiences appear to have helped frame her understanding of womanhood and have influenced her career decision (Paechter, 2006).

Kate decided she wanted to become a teacher during her A levels and like Helen, went on to attend teacher training college. She says:

When I was at sixth form college, I thought yes I want to be a teacher and I want to be a primary teacher but it is as black and white as that. You know there was no sort of ‘ahh’ light bulb moment or anything like that so yeah basically as simple as that but I think what I realised was well I decided I wanted to be a teacher that it is definitely because I wanted to do something to enrich or help others (Kate, first interview).

Both Kate and Helen, who are of a similar generation, are perhaps typical of their background and education. Women of their generation, from middle class backgrounds, were still limited in their career choices due to societal and cultural influences (Braun, 2012) with career options still shaped by gender stereotypes.

However, the gendered beliefs and attitudes to women working with young children has perpetuated across generations and is evident in Rebecca’s story of how she became a teacher. From a young age, she wanted to be a nursery nurse. Despite wanting to do a child development course, she was dissuaded.

I did my GCSEs and actually at school when we were choosing your options I wanted to do... Child Development was offered at school. And I put that down as my option and my teachers wouldn’t let me do it. They said ‘no, that’s only for students that aren’t so academically bright’. And they put me in for Physics and Biology (Rebecca, first interview).

Rebecca was encouraged to pursue A levels, but continued to want to do an NNEB. After a number of failed attempts at various A level courses, she decided to do what she wanted to do and completed the NNEB course; this ironically then led her to achieving her degree. She recalls the course:

Really loved it yeah and, that then kind of was the springboard for going to uni... I don’t think I would’ve gone to university had I not have done that (Rebecca, first interview).

Rebecca was seen as academically able by her family and school, so a course such as an NNEB, with a focus on childcare and play did not hold high status and was not viewed as an academic route (Barron, 2016; McGillivray 2008).

Evidence from the narratives above suggests that the participants' pedagogical beliefs had been influenced by the 'feminisation' of teaching (Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Skelton & Francis, 2009; Thomson & Kehily, 2011). Schools are communities that construct an understanding of what it is to be female. The femininities that the participants experienced from their teachers connected femininity to being caring and nice (Paechter, 2009). Some of the words that the participants used to describe why they liked their own teachers such as 'calm and friendly', focus more on characteristics that would support a caring and nurturing role, rather than an intellectual one. Equally, some of the reasons why the participants chose to become teachers, also reflected the need to enact a caring role, such as 'wanting to help others' and 'loving children'. Other reasons to teach were influenced by family background and the values established by female relatives and the understanding that teaching is a good job to fit in with family life. These influences appear to have come from different people in their lives, such as female teachers and relatives, but there was also evidence of wider societal influences. For example, Kate, Helen and Rebecca's narratives, give examples of the gendered nature of early years teaching, particularly how working with young children is often seen as more of a social, caring profession rather than an intellectual one (Braun, 2012). Interestingly, all three women have gone on to have successful teaching careers and all hold senior positions in their schools.

The participants' decisions to pursue a career in teaching appears similar to the women in Smith's (2007) study in that they were neither 'completely free or completely forced' (2007:150) into teaching, in that their career choice has been

influenced by a range of contexts, including childhood experiences, schools, social class and family expectation.

Continuing with exploring how the participants' sense of gender influences their pedagogy, I now turn to look at how the participants' maternal identity has impacted on their pedagogical beliefs.

Becoming a mother

At the time of being interviewed, the majority of the study participants were mothers. Of the twelve participants, nine of the women had children; Jo, Grace, Helen, Karen, Anne, Kate, Emily, Kelly and Mary and at the time of interview Sophie was expecting her first baby. Early childhood education has historically been shaped by maternal discourses (Ailwood , 2008; Osgood, 2012) and many of these participants made a direct link between their maternal and professional identities, and how being a mother had impacted on their pedagogy. The decision to become early years teachers for Anne, Mary, Karen and Jo was directly linked to becoming mothers, as they all changed their careers after having children. Pinnegar et al.'s (2005) research highlights the importance of examining how teaching and mothering is related and that through examining teachers' stories about mothering and motherhood a greater understanding of teaching beliefs can be gained. The following section of this chapter will explore the influence of the participants' maternal identities on their pedagogical beliefs.

Grace, particularly made a strong connection with her beliefs and mothering, and how becoming a mother had directly influenced her pedagogy. In fact, one of the reasons she decided to teach was due to it being a good profession to fit round motherhood. Grace taught briefly in a state school after completing her teacher training and then did not return to teaching until after having her own children. Becoming a mother and wanting to choose the right education for her children, then influenced where and how she wanted to teach. She recalls:

And then it changed because I then got very interested in motherhood and mothering and what was right for a child... and education starting at home and so my first child...he was an August baby and I sent him off to school. I remember my head teacher saying 'He's going to be in the August baby group, what are you doing?' I didn't understand it until it came and he was tiny and he went off to school in a blazer at four. I was like 'this isn't right, this doesn't feel right' and so I started looking into alternative things...and we moved out of London and we moved to a Steiner School... and that's when I suddenly thought 'wow, this is different, totally different, it doesn't have to be...' Because I was state trained, my grandma was state, my first child went to state, it doesn't have to be like that, there's other ways of doing it and it felt like the, the home was more linked... and it felt like a more natural environment, more caring, softer, more child-centred. So all, all that was a- awakened by my mothering really and having my own kids (Grace, first interview).

Grace's experience of seeing her child in school echoes the experience of one of the teachers in Thomas and Kehily's study (2011) who felt unsettled when her knowledge of teaching was disrupted when her child went to school and her professional and maternal worlds collided. Grace too appears to re think her pedagogy when she sees her child in school and this leads her to re-assess where she teaches and where her child goes to school.

As Grace discussed what she wanted for the children she taught, she linked the importance of her mothering role and the domestic routines of the home to her

pedagogy. Acker (1995) highlights the connection between teaching and

domestic routines and how this supports the notion of 'caring'. Grace says:

I come very much from the emotional intelligence and very much from the home at this age so things like snack time and eating and the smells in the kitchen and the washing up and the routines and the singing and the comfort and the nurturing and if you wanna cuddle sit and have a cuddle with me and let's have a chat, you know I'm very much I think... that takes away all the stresses and soothes you know especially with the three year olds that have just arrived (Grace, first interview).

The emphasis on the home is accentuated in Grace's second interview when she discusses the importance of food and links food and cooking to her pedagogical beliefs. For Grace, it appears that the domesticity of the home is connected to her teaching role in the classroom (Grumet, 1988).

I still believe because of the age group....home and home links so important and there's something around stress as well, keeping things neutral, keeping things warm and secure and stress free because then they're gonna be more relaxed, more receptive, more ready. So I do find myself doing a lot of cooking and a lot of 'foody' related things, that's obviously back to my mothering as well but again you can get so much learning out of 'we'll make apple crumble now'....so they have that whole process, they're using their fingers, they're weighing, they're measuring, they're cooking, they're doing all that and then they're sitting down and eating and you know our snack times are really important to them and our, you know that's still important to me that kind of extension of home and our talking to the parents and making sure the parents are really involved... food and cooking was very important as I was growing up actually (Grace, second interview).

Grace teaches in a Froebelian school and it was Froebel who observed mothers with their infants and through the Kindergarten wanted to create 'a public setting imbued with the maternal love found in the private domestic world' (Read 2003:20). Grace's desire to re-create a home setting in school, particularly through first hand experiences like cooking very much echoes a Froebelian philosophy. This suggests that Grace's pedagogical beliefs are being supported and reinforced by the school's pedagogy (Reay, 2004). Grace's school imbues a

nurturing and caring culture and this is in line with her own beliefs that have been shaped by her maternal identity.

Similar to Grace, Kate's maternal identity appeared to have had a strong impact on her pedagogical beliefs. When Kate had her own children, she made a conscious decision to mother them in a different way to how she was mothered. Being able to parent in the way she wanted to was incredibly important to her and this also then impacted on her teaching.

So then having the children and just and I think the biggest thing it did make me realise is that you know when you hand that child over it is so precious, you know as a parent, it is so precious and you want that teacher to feel that precious...you know love your child and sort of protect them as much as you know you do and I think you know it made me understand more parental anxieties and being sort of more ... made me you know respond to parents better (Kate, first interview).

In her interview we talked about love and what this looked like in the classroom.

Whatever the definition of love is ... you know just wanting to protect them and do the best for them and you know make them feel so emotionally secure and they have such a positive self-esteem (Kate, first interview).

Interestingly, Kate describes what she did not have much experience of as a child and as discussed previously, she actively chose to parent in a different way to how she was brought up. Kate discusses 'loving' the children and Page (2010) in her research focusing on the childcare choices mothers make for their babies, argues that there is a need to talk about professional love. However, Kate's understanding of love and caring appears to be very much connected to her maternal identity and there is a suggestion that early years professionals need to see caring beyond just being a fulfilment of maternal concern and develop a better understanding of their emotional work (Taggart, 2011).

Karen's maternal identity has also influenced her pedagogical beliefs. She recalls growing up in a supportive family and describes the strong 'motherly love' she had from her own mother. She sees creating that family atmosphere within her class as important and likes the family environment of her school. The importance she places on family is a value established from her own upbringing, which she wants to recreate in her classroom (Bourdieu, 1990). Karen empathises with the parents and understands the big step of sending your child off to school.

I mean I always look at the children and think, I suppose being a mature student and having children of my own, I like to think that I treat the children...and their expectations are what I'd want for my own children and I think I've got a good relationship with them. I always look at the children, they are my extended family and that's the way they are. I see some of the mums, it's a big step letting go of your child and that's why I think it's important to have relationships (Karen, first interview).

Karen, Kate and Grace, appear to negotiate their maternal and professional identities with some fluidity, being happy to bring 'their mothering selves' (Collins cited in Hauver-James, 2010:523) into their classrooms. The emotional investment they place on caring for their students is evident in their narratives. Hauver-James (2010) suggests that there is a need to better understand teachers' acts of caring, particularly in relation to the consequences for ourselves on caring for others and also to gain a better understanding of what it means to care.

Mary also acknowledges the positive influence her mother had on her as a parent and how this influence has then gone on to shape her teaching.

I think my mum really influenced perhaps the way I began to parent 'cause you are like your mum, when you start off, and then you develop your own ideas, and I remember I always felt very secure in a fairly extended family setting and that meant a lot 'cause even when things went wrong we still knew that...there would be somebody there and even if they were cross you knew that they still loved you, and that I think is

the beginning...and you can say you've done that wrong but you need the children to be secure enough that they know that you still care about them and although it is different in a school setting I still feel that they need to feel secure so that you can say 'Well actually that isn't quite right is it' or you can move them on and say 'Could we make it better, can you think how you can do it', whether it be in a sort of social situation or making something or doing something (Mary, first interview).

She feels becoming a mother herself changed her and also helped to continue her interest in child development.

I think it's given me a different perspective, a more, a nurturing perspective and also it, I realised how important it was to get those early years right because everything then builds upon it but as much as anything else I just find it fascinating (Mary, first interview).

Mary's secure family upbringing, coupled with her understanding of child development and becoming a mother herself, appear to have influenced the nurturing approach that she wants to create in her teaching.

Emily, like Grace talked of the importance of physical closeness with the children and creating a nurturing environment. Emily cites becoming a mother as being influential to her pedagogy, but also the training she has done on attachment and babies' brain development.

I'm a massive believer about a kind of real nurturing environment and especially with young children, a place that they feel safe and secure and where adults don't feel like they have to have a barrier between them and the child, that it's OK to sit them on your lap and read them a story, you know to have a closeness (Emily, first interview).

These beliefs about the importance of nurture and positive relationships were clearly echoed in the objects Emily chose to represent her pedagogy during her second interview. She used a heart to represent the importance she places on emotional connections and attachment. She explains:

Emotional connections between children and practitioners...that I believe is really important and kind of emotional connections between parents and their children as well, so really thinking about attachment and things like that and how important that key person is in a child's life or whether it's the key person here or it's their parent as the key person but how strong that relationship needs to be I think is really, really important for that child to feel kind of safe and secure and loved and ... part of a place (Emily, second interview).

Like Kate and Karen, being a parent has given Emily a different perspective, 'it makes me see things differently'. She knows 'how challenging being a parent is' and she feels she knows how parents want to be treated and places a big emphasis on building positive relationships with parents. However, the emphasis that Emily places on the importance of developing nurturing relationships with children is not just influenced by her maternal identity but also by her understanding of developmental theories. This is also true of Mary, who cites her interest and understanding of child development as helping to shape her pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, perhaps Emily and Mary's understanding of caring concurs with Taggart's argument that early years professionals need to go 'beyond caring' (2011) and they are showing evidence of a being able to be more critically reflective about their emotional work.

Evidence from the narratives above suggests that the participants' pedagogy had been strongly influenced by their maternal identity. However, there also appeared to be other influencing factors. For example, in Grace's case, her school also enacted a strong nurturing philosophy, which resonated with Grace's pedagogy, and could also have reinforced her beliefs. Grace's experience seems to resonate with Barber's study (2002), which explored how teachers enacted and understood their caring responsibilities, and how the institution's unique habitus

directly influenced this. Similar to the discussion in the previous chapter, for some of the women, there appears to be a continuity of mothering values passed on from the previous generation, for example, this was evident in Mary and Karen's narratives, when they cite the influence of their own mothers on their mothering styles (Reay, 2004). Equally, for women such as Grace and Kate, it was their own experience of becoming a mother that appeared to be most influential and they made strong links between their maternal identity and their pedagogical beliefs.

For four of the participants, becoming a mother directly impacted on their decision to then become a teacher and particularly drew them into early years teaching. Historically, teaching has been seen as a child-friendly career for women (Thomson & Kehily, 2011) and for some of the study participants it appears that teaching offered them a career where they could balance their home and work responsibilities. Mary, Anne and Karen all trained to be teachers as mature students and became involved in early years education through having their own children. Jo originally trained as a secondary teacher, then after having her own children moved into early years.

After university, Mary had a successful career in the NHS, but then stopped work to have her children. She became involved in her local toddler and pre-school groups and then worked in a nursery. She waited until she felt her children were old enough and then went to train for a PGCE. Her interest in child development had started during her first degree, however having her own children and then going on to teacher training, reignited this interest. Although becoming a mother

had steered her into the direction of teaching, it was also the academic side of child development that motivated her to retrain.

I realised how important it was to get those early years right because everything then builds upon it but as much as anything else I just find it fascinating, I just find it interesting how quickly they move from a two year old is so different to a three year old and I just, just as an academic thing I just love see the way it goes and the way the minds work and how it's just different to you as a grown up. I became a teacher because I really enjoyed working with young children and I really felt that I wanted to make a difference, I wanted to not only to help them to learn but to help them to be themselves, to help them to be a complete person so I've always taken a very sort of holistic approach (Mary, first interview).

Mary articulated this holistic, nurturing approach within her pedagogy throughout her interview. She pursued further training on nurture, and after teaching in key stage one, then felt happier with the more holistic approach of early years.

Anne also stopped her original career to have children, and also to accommodate her husband's job, which took him away from home for long periods of time. She describes having to be 'self sufficient' as she was on her own raising her children when her husband was away. Like many mothers, Anne had to carefully balance the demands of motherhood, being a wife and employment (Thomson & Kehily, 2011). She initially became a child minder because it was 'convenient and fitted in with her life style'. However, the more she became involved in early years the more she enjoyed it. She then had the support and encouragement to study and train, initially doing an NNEB, then a degree and then a PGCE, finally giving her the chance to study, which she had chosen not to pursue when she was younger. She acknowledges that at times it was hard juggling motherhood and studying.

I had the two boys at home as well then, and trying to sort of support their studies...and focus on my own. And run a home, with a, with a

husband that... in the job he's now in and then, he travels the world and he's probably home for a week a month (Anne, first interview).

Karen also echoed Anne's acknowledgment of the pressures of juggling motherhood and studying. When she started her studying, her children were starting to work towards their GCSEs and she felt she could be 'the perfect role model' and study alongside them. Although she remembers that working full time, doing a degree and juggling family life was at times stressful.

Both Anne and Karen, identify their backgrounds as working class. There was not a culture of going to university in their families, so when they left school they both started work. As Anne says, about her mother's reaction to her leaving the sixth form before completing her A levels.

No, nobody in my family... had ever been to university. Um and so in that respect there wasn't the... I don't think and I wouldn't say that my parents weren't supportive 'cause they were... but actually for me to go off and leave school and get a job was completely normal, it would have not been normal for me to go to university...(Anne, first interview).

Through having children Anne changed her career course and returned to studying, gaining a degree and then a teaching qualification. Through engaging in studying again as a mature student and training to teach, Anne has disrupted the dispositions of her family and provides an example of how the individual's habitus can be re-structured over time (Thomas, 2002).

Jo, like Anne, also became a child minder when she had her own children. As Taggart (2011) suggests, becoming a child minder provides women with the option for employment and childcare for their own children. For Jo, the decision to childmind was driven by her desire to stay at home with her own children, as she felt it was important to be with them in their early years.

I wanted to be a mother....and I didn't want to walk out of the door... and I wanted to be there for the early years, and then had an interesting debate within myself that I'm quite happy to try and make my living out of looking after other people's children in my own home. But I wouldn't, I wouldn't want to leave my children in the first 3 years of their lives. That was a very interesting...(Jo, first interview).

Jo's experience resonates with some of the teachers in Thomson and Kehily's study (2011) who, after having their own children wanted to separate their professional and personal selves and put their babies first. By deciding not to go back into the classroom after having her children, Jo could concentrate on being a mother. Child minding possibly provided her with a more comfortable career option at this time as she was still able to concentrate on her maternal aims.

Due to being a child minder and becoming a mother, Jo decided not to return to her original career as a secondary art teacher, but retrained to teach in early years. Her decision to move to early years teaching was influenced by becoming a mother and a child minder but also from her own upbringing. As discussed in the first findings chapter, Jo identified a strong influence from her mother and grandmother and she cites reflecting on her upbringing as one of the areas that made her feel confident in her early years teaching. Jo's gendered experiences in childhood and her understanding of mothering have established strong values, which have stayed with her and are now influencing how she responds within a teaching context (Webb et al., 2002).

Summary

This chapter explored how the participants became early years teachers and examined the influence of aspects of their gender identity and becoming mothers on their pedagogy and their decision to teach.

Evidence from the narratives showed that the participants' pedagogical beliefs had been influenced by certain femininities that had shaped their understanding of being a teacher (Paechter, 2006). Female relatives and female teachers had influenced some of the participants' gendered experiences in childhood and had helped to establish that teaching is associated with certain gendered behaviours (Gaskell & Mullen, 2009). By seeing teaching as a feminised profession (Coffey & Delamont, 2000) some of the participants cited caring and nurturing as an important part of their pedagogy. There was also evidence of wider social contexts at play, for example in Kate and Helen's narratives. Due to their generation, career choices were more limited and teaching was seen as a suitable career for women from middle class backgrounds, therefore following typically gendered pathways.

For the participants who were mothers, their maternal identity had helped to shape their pedagogical beliefs in a number of ways. In Osgood's (2012) study of the professional identities of nursery workers, she found that her participants' narratives were 'saturated with references to motherhood' (2012:87). The same is true for many of my study participants, with many making detailed references to motherhood and mothering. For these participants there appeared to be a natural

link between their mothering and teaching (Hauver-James, 2010; Thomas & Kehily, 2011) and aspects of their pedagogical beliefs, particularly around their understanding of care and nurturing which have been shaped by their maternal identity (Ailwood, 2008). For example, Grace not only saw the emotional side of mothering as important but also wanted to replicate the domestic side of motherhood in her teaching.

Whilst some of the participants actively connected their pedagogical beliefs to their maternal identity, it is important to note that not all of the participants identified with these maternal discourses (Osgood, 2012). Emily and Mary's understanding of nurture and attachment was to some extent shaped by their maternal identities, however it was also influenced by their training and understanding of developmental theories.

For a number of women, having their own children steered them into a career in early years, with teaching providing them with an opportunity to balance work and family life.

The next chapter moves on to examine how the participants' pedagogical beliefs have developed since their training and how policy and early years practice has shaped their pedagogy.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Analysis of findings part three: Being an early years teacher

Introduction

This chapter particularly addresses research question one: What are the key influencing factors that shape the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers?

Evidence from the data showed that wider influences such as government policy and the historical legacy of early years impacted on the formation of the participants' pedagogical beliefs. Through examining the pedagogical beliefs that the participants enact in their current settings many overlapping themes and commonalities emerged, indicating a shared pedagogy that had been shaped by early years policy and practice.

The first section of this chapter discusses how the participants' pedagogical beliefs have developed since they started their teacher training. Evidence from the narratives also showed how the participants' pedagogical beliefs had continued to develop over time. This was evident in their discussions about being reflective and changing their practice. This suggested their ability to engage in reflective thought, which is an important process that enabled them to gain pedagogical awareness (Moyle et al., 2002, 2002a; Stephen, 2010). The ability to be reflective also supports the concept of phronesis and the ability to move away from a more technical approach and utilise reflection and intuition

(Birmingham, 2012). When discussing the early years curriculum, the participants gave interesting examples of how they were able to move from the technical process of teaching to teaching in a way that supported their pedagogy. This indicates that one of the influences on the formation of pedagogical beliefs, is the participants themselves and their ability to reflect on their thinking and practice.

The second part of the chapter examines some of the pedagogical principles that were shared amongst the participants. There were commonalities within the participants' pedagogical approaches that appear to have been influenced by wider contexts, such as the historical and contemporary context of early years education and early years policy.

This chapter concludes with exploring an early years identity. All of the participants saw themselves as early years teachers and were also strong advocates for the profession. This final section will look at some of the unique pedagogical principles of early years that the participants shared and also explore how they see their position in the wider school system. It will also examine the conflicting constructions of the child that are presented within educational policy and how these different ideals have positioned early years within the educational system.

Developing Pedagogy

Evidence from the participants' narratives indicated that their pedagogical beliefs had developed over time. The participants discussed how their beliefs had developed and what had been influential from the start of their training. They discussed the impact of their training, influence of their schools, further training they had received after they had started teaching and also how they had reflected on and developed their pedagogy. In their discussion about the early years curriculum, there was also evidence of being able to reflect and adapt the curriculum to suit their pedagogical beliefs. Several of the participants displayed the ability to be reflective and how they felt that what they did was instinctive rather than drawing on certain training or other influences (Andrew, 2015; Birmingham, 2012; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

All of the participants discussed their teacher training and some discussed further professional development they had received during their careers. As has been noted previously, the participants took different routes into teaching. Four of the participants – Helen, Kate, Kelly and Emily undertook degrees that qualified them to teach, either a BEd degree or a degree with QTS (qualified teacher status). The other eight participants all completed degrees first and then completed postgraduate qualifications to give them qualified teacher status. Three participants – Rebecca, Anne and Karen completed education based degrees, whilst the others completed arts based degrees, apart from Mary who undertook a science degree. Helen was the only participant who had gone on to

do a postgraduate qualification and had recently completed an MA in early years education.

The teacher training that the participants received appeared to have varying influences on their pedagogy. For some of the participants, it was not the lectures nor the theoretical side of their teacher training that had a significant impact on their pedagogy, but the practical school experience that appeared to be the most influential. As the participants recalled the start of their careers, they particularly discussed the benefit of gaining practical and technical knowledge. As Andrew (2015) highlighted, often in early years education these are the aspects of knowledge that have been more prominent and practical wisdom (phronesis) has been overlooked. However, what was interesting was as they shared their examples of their professional development, more evidence of practical wisdom came into play.

Emily remembers her teaching placements being particularly influential and recalls: 'I would say I learnt more about how to be a teacher doing it practically'. When thinking about the taught aspect of her training, she says: 'I remember a lot of that kind of being theory based, but me not being able to put, to make it relevant to what I was doing'.

This suggests that at the beginning of her career, Emily found the more technical side of teaching easier to grasp, perhaps being able to follow procedure more easily rather than using reflection (Zagzebski cited in Birmingham, 2012).

Kelly too echoes Emily's belief that teaching placements have the most impact.

I think the placements were key. I think I learnt everything from my placements and I suppose it's kind of similar to what you ask from children like you teach them it then they apply it don't they, and I think like when I was sort of in my lectures thinking I'm not getting anything from this but then you do 'cause you apply it in the placements but when you're actually sat there you're thinking I'm not, you know all sorts of theory, thinking this is never gonna come into use but I guess it does but I definitely think the hands on training was what makes you a better teacher (Kelly, first interview).

Kate also felt that the teaching placements had the biggest impact on developing her as a teacher.

In my third and fourth year I was given some really sole charge of the class, far earlier than I should have done and that's a steep learning curve, you have to get on with it. So both those blocks of teaching practice, very supportive teachers left me to my own devices and it just worked, my confidence grew and I suppose I got you know, it was the first hand experience you know innately knew how I thought children learnt and the best environment (Kate, first interview).

Kate, Kelly and Emily not only felt that the practical side of their training was the most beneficial, but also that they had positive role models and experiences during their school placements. Emily described her placement teacher as 'amazing', Kelly's teacher mentors where all 'positive and helpful' and Kate's were 'very supportive'.

Sarah had the opposite experience and did not have particularly positive placement experiences and also felt that the theoretical side of her training was lacking. She felt her placements did not 'prepare her for the job'. Her first placement in a reception class was 'un-inspirational' and she recalls no lectures on child development.

Sophie also felt that there were aspects of her training that were lacking. She recalled having sessions on child development but felt her training was very focused on key stage one and two with early years being neglected.

I have to say considering that I did the early years and key stage one strand most of it was focused around key stage one. In fact most of the training was focused around key stage one and key stage two because although we did specialise so our assignments were often specialised within my form group, within some of my lectures and seminars there would also be people who were key stage one and key stage two path so it wasn't always very focused in early years...there were a lot of lecturers who didn't feel that confident in talking about early years or what it really looked like in practice. A lot of them just talked about reception as being a bit like a mini year one (Sophie, first interview).

These examples show that the participants had come into their training already with an understanding and notion of what was 'good' teaching and what was going to be beneficial to their teaching development (Raths, 2001). It is interesting that with very little experience in schools and of teaching, Sarah felt that what she was seeing on her first placement was 'un-inspirational', Kate during her teaching placements felt she 'innately' knew how children learnt, and Sophie recognised that the early years lectures were not high quality. The participants' experience would concur with Raths' (2001) research, which suggests that trainee teachers come into training with many of their pedagogical beliefs already in place.

Six of the participants – Sarah, Karen, Grace, Jo, Mary and Emily, identified the training and guidance they received after they started teaching in early years had been influential on their pedagogical development.

Sarah felt the courses she attended, run by early years advisors had helped her with practical ideas, but had also encouraged her to read. She recalls being told:

You need to continue to be learners and not just read things because people are telling you to, but seek out things that interest you and read about it and get your ideas (Sarah, first interview).

Karen also valued the training she has had since qualifying. When she receives feedback after being observed, she actively tries to work on this and when she attends her NQT training she makes a point of taking at least one thing away and implementing it.

Both Sarah and Karen, are early in their careers, but are articulating their ability to begin to reflect on their practice and an awareness that it is important to move forward in their thinking (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

Grace, Jo, Mary and Emily also recalled training that they had received once they were qualified teachers as impacting on their pedagogy. For Grace and Jo, working in a school based on Froebelian principles, these ideas have influenced them. At the time of interview, Grace was undertaking a course on Froebel and felt 'inspired' by this. She also mentions the Froebelian principles of spirituality, unity and connection as being influential to her pedagogy. Jo feels that she is actively encouraged to engage in reading and research, particularly around Froebelian pedagogy.

Mary's interest in child development started before she trained to be a teacher, during her first degree. The modules she took on cognitive development were influential in her thinking about teaching 'that I think is where I started to think about teaching and how young children develop' (Mary, first interview). It was having the opportunity later on in her career, to do further training as a nurture teacher that also inspired her.

Jo, Grace, and Mary, discuss being ‘inspired’ by training, ‘engaging’ with reading and ‘thinking’ about teaching, which suggests an active involvement in their pedagogical development (Moyle et al., 2002).

Emily recalls how her thinking about outdoor learning has changed. In her current job, valuing outdoor learning is a key part of the philosophy of the setting.

What I used to think when I first started was that taking them outdoors is almost like cheating because that’s where they love to be. And you could make noise if they needed to or they could run if they wanted to. That it was always kind of like ‘Oh that seems too easy’ to just take them outdoors so I now understand that giving them the opportunity to do that but making sure there’s key learning opportunities out there as well (Emily, first interview).

Emily also reflects on the professional responsibility to engage with new ideas. She feels it is not just important to have the opportunity to go on training but then there is a professional responsibility to engage with the training.

If you don’t put yourself out there to learn these new things, how will you learn them, so it’s always making sure you keep up to date with new initiatives and things like that (Emily, first interview).

The culture of Jo, Grace and Emily’s schools, appears to actively encourage engagement in reading and research. The schools also value and promote certain ideas – in the case of Jo and Grace, Froebelian ideas are key to the school’s philosophy and in Emily’s case, the high importance the school places on outdoor learning has impacted and changed her ideas. These values are part of the institutional habitus (Reay et al., 2001; 2009) of each setting and have impacted on and are in agreement with the teachers’ own pedagogy. However, although these schools promote reading and research, as Emily articulates there

is a professional responsibility to then actively reflect and engage with it. Grace also feels the reflective part of the job is very important. She states:

I love that, it feels very intellectual, I'm like that. My quick part of my brain really likes that and I like every week that we sit, you know, and we talk about particular kids and we talk about what, what will help them, what we can put in and what we can plan for next week (Grace, first interview).

The ability to reflect is an important part of developing pedagogical belief and supports Bruner's thinking, where he suggests that in order to prevent our pedagogy being tacit then it is necessary for teachers to develop *agency* by taking control of their own mental activity, using *reflection* to make sense and understand what is learned (1996:87). To prevent pedagogy from being tacit, it is not enough for teachers to just attend training or read up on research, but as Emily states, which very much echoes Bruner's point, there is then the need to develop personal agency and reflect and think and then apply that learning. The importance of reflection and its link with pedagogical growth was also highlighted in the SPEEL project (Moyle et al., 2002). The study found that the process of reflection was a useful tool in beginning to support practitioners in articulating their pedagogy and that through reflective dialogue pedagogical layers were 'unpeeled' and deeper reflection emerged. They state:

Just as we now expect children to be engaged in the metacognitive process exemplified in Bruner's work, this must apply equally to the practitioners if they are to further hone and develop their professional skills (2002:3).

Emily's ability to change her thinking about outdoor play and Grace's engagement with training and acknowledgement that reflective practice is an important part of her job supports the thinking that reflection supports pedagogical growth and ideas.

Developing a reflective approach

Many of the participants gave examples of the ability to be reflective and intuitive in their narratives, suggesting that this was an important part of their pedagogical beliefs. The following section shares some examples of how the participants moved away from being influenced by more technical and practical knowledge and started to utilise practical wisdom and engage in a reflective approach (Willis, 2008).

A number of the participants talked about being or becoming instinctive in their teaching and shared examples of being reflective. Kate discussed the importance of being reflective and stated ‘I think the biggest, one of the biggest skills is to be able to reflect and modify’. When asked whether she thought this was something she had learned to do, she felt: ‘I would say it was more of who I am than the way I was taught’. This ability to trust her feelings and make good judgements was evident early on in her career. Kate’s ability to make good judgements echoes Willis’ description of phronesis when he states that it is ‘the type of knowledge needed to make good decisions in a given context’ (2008:128).

During her training she said she felt she ‘innately knew how I thought children learnt and the best environment for them’. She also felt that she has always had the confidence to teach in the way she wanted to, although this sometimes meant she was teaching in a different way to other teachers in her school. She feels that the head teachers she has worked with have let her teach in this way as she has always produced good results and the children have been progressing and happy. She also stated that due to being reflective she was always prepared to rectify

any mistakes - 'I've made that mistake and I will try my best not to do it or adapt'. When considering where her confidence comes from she says:

I am who I am because of experiences I've had....I think it has come from experience from, yes, reading books, and articles, and just also standing back observing you know my own children (Kate, first interview).

Knowledge of the self is an important factor in the ability to be reflective (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006; Turner-Bisset, 1999). It would appear that Kate has this ability to be reflective within her pedagogy, thereby using phronesis or practical wisdom as part of her pedagogical approach. As she has gained more personal and professional experience this appears to have continued to develop, suggesting an approach that goes beyond just a technical method of teaching to a more intuitive one (Birmingham, 2012; Schon, 1983; Turner-Bisset, 1999). In some of the other participants' narratives there was also evidence of this ability to reflect and move forward in their pedagogical thinking and beliefs.

Jo, like Kate felt that although the learning and reading side of teaching was important, but so too was the instinctive side and developing this reflective side had given her confidence.

You have to respond to things directly and instantly, that you can plan great ideas but actually most of your day to day working is responding to what's happening now....I think that after reflecting on it I think that's what's given me extra confidence is that my yeah instinctive approach does have reason behind it (Jo, first interview).

Jo's ability to 'respond to things directly and instantly' echoes with Rodgers and Raider-Roth's suggestion of the importance of teachers to have 'awareness and receptivity' (2006:265). Jo articulates how her pedagogical development has been supported by working alongside her colleague, Grace. Having the ability to

actively collaborate with others is an important part of developing a reflective approach (Zagzebski cited in Birmingham, 2012). Jo recalls: ‘we started off un-instantive and then that reality of going ‘oh, ok’ that was really good’. As she has reflected on her practice her confidence has developed. Like Kate, though Jo also feels her life experiences have been significant and cites her upbringing has been influential and has helped to develop her confidence.

For the teachers in the early stages of their careers, there were also examples of reflection and a development in pedagogical thinking but also an acknowledgment that this was still emerging. The early career teachers did not articulate the same sense of confidence that more experienced teachers, like Kate articulated, but acknowledged that their confidence was forming. Sarah sees herself as ‘a developing teacher’ and says: ‘Whereas for so long I just feel like I’ve been doing what I’ve been told to do’, she is now becoming more confident and is taking more ownership over her pedagogy. She says in relation to learning more and taking on new ideas:

I need to just make sure that for myself as a developing teacher, you know, I need to be doing that and taking that all on board for... so that I can then bring it in and implement it for my children. Like it’s just... it hasn’t stopped, I don’t feel like I am the finished article at all, I don’t know if you ever do? (Sarah, first interview)

Kelly, who is an NQT, also echoed a similar feeling and brings a picture of the cartoon deer character ‘Bambi’ to her second interview. This is to represent how she is ‘still finding her feet’.

Yeah Bambi, yeah, I feel like I’m still finding my feet and kind of, you know, learning it every day, every day is a new day and that is kind of in my head, that’s what it was like, I just felt like I’m kind of skating on thin ice sometimes, and yeah, a little bit wobbly (Kelly, second interview).

Sarah and Kelly appear to be aware that they need to actively engage in their own pedagogical growth (Moyles et al., 2002). Although having the opportunity to engage with training, reading, talking to colleagues has an influence, there also appears to be a key part that personal agency plays in this and the teacher's ability to reflect and engage in their own thinking (Bruner, 1996).

Another example of how the participants displayed evidence of reflection and the ability to move from a more technical teaching approach to a more intuitive one (Andrew 2015), was in their discussions about the early years curriculum and how it supported their teaching. After a number of policy changes, the statutory Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2012) curriculum was introduced in 2012 and then revised in 2014 and 2017.

There was evidence in the participants' discussions about the curriculum and how it influenced their pedagogical beliefs that suggested they were able to move away from the curriculum and interpret in ways that fitted with their own pedagogy. This resonates with Zagzebski's point that good judgement will come into play and teachers will be less aware of following set procedure (Zagzebski cited in Birmingham, 2012). This was particularly evident with some of the more experienced teachers such as Emily, Kate, and Anne, which would indicate that experience had contributed to their more reflective and confident approach. In fact, Emily shared this point when discussing the curriculum. She says:

I think it's good for less knowledgeable practitioners you know breaking it into age ranges and what's expected. I can't say that I ... it's like a bible to me, it's... but I think it's a really good document and starting point for ... but I think the more you work in education and the more time you spend just in your own learning you under... you get to realise what the backbone of Early Years (Emily, first interview).

However, she feels this takes time to develop:

I think it takes years to get that confidence....this is what I believe and this is what, this is why we do this and you know and you can show that the children are developing and learning (Emily, first interview).

When considering the curriculum, both Kate and Anne felt that their confidence and experience meant that they did not need to focus on it too much. Kate said ‘I don’t want to sound arrogant but when teaching for what....I know what you need to do’. Anne also expressed her own self-belief:

I think if I was to read everything and listen to and dissect every little thing that Mr Gove (then Secretary of State for Education) spouted um I’d get quite cross and quite uptight about it...So I just let it happen really. Because... I don’t know whether it’s stubbornness... or whether it’s um self belief but I, I believe what I’m doing is good...and I believe the way I’m doing it is very very good, and when people say ‘actually I’ve learnt a lot from you’ or ‘yeah wow, that’s good, I’m gonna have a go at that’...Um and I see the children are making really good progress, and I get the feedback from the parents, I just think ‘well actually you can put what you want in a policy and you can put what you want on a piece of paper’ and I’ll make it fit because I’m quite happy with what I’m doing here (Anne, first interview).

For the less experienced teachers who were perhaps still at the more technical stage of teaching (Birmingham, 2012), the procedural elements of the curriculum appeared to be more beneficial. Kelly found the curriculum helpful, stating:

The actual Development Matters statements and all of that, they kind of form the basis I think of your teaching really ‘cause you’ve got to make sure that, at the end of the day you do have to make sure they are meeting all of those things, so that definitely influences my teaching (Kelly, first interview).

Sarah also felt that the early years curriculum provided good guidance for her as a new teacher, feeling that it was clear and helped to plan what the children should be working towards.

These two sections; Developing Pedagogy and Developing a reflective approach, highlight how the participants' pedagogical beliefs have changed and developed over time. Evidence from the participants' narratives showed that they started their teacher training with some of their pedagogical ideas and beliefs in place. There were examples of a shift from valuing the more technical and practical side of teaching to gaining a greater personal insight into their pedagogy and becoming more instinctive in their approach. This was evident for example, in how some of the participants were able to move away from the procedural elements of the curriculum and rely on their own instinct. It appeared that the ability to engage in reflective practice supported the participants' pedagogical growth. It was clear though, that this ability to develop a more innate approach developed over time, with the more experienced teachers appearing more confident in their self-belief.

I will now move to examine some of the key pedagogical principles that the participants shared.

A shared pedagogy

This section explores the participants' current practice and pedagogy. It particularly examines the key pedagogical principles that the participants articulated which shape their everyday practice, and the resources and activities that they see as being key to their pedagogical beliefs. It also examines some of the pedagogical tensions that exist when working as an early years teacher (Wood, 2004).

What was evident from the participants' narratives was a shared early years pedagogy that was being articulated, with many beliefs, principles and ideas being similar amongst all of the participants. In order to better understand the commonalities that the participants were sharing, I will examine how these may have been influenced by wider contexts, such as the historical and contemporary context of early years education and early years policy (Jarvis et al., 2017).

When sharing their pedagogical beliefs, the participants discussed the resources and activities that they felt were the most important for children to access and engage with. In previous chapters, particularly the first of these analysis chapters, I shared the impact of the participants' childhood experiences on their pedagogical beliefs. It was evident that the activities and resources that they had to play with as children had gone on to influence their pedagogy. However, when the participants were sharing their current practice and pedagogy, there were many similarities in relation to the activities and resources they wanted to provide for the children they taught. Due to these similarities, it would appear that their pedagogical beliefs were being influenced by wider contexts as well as more personal ones (Alexander, 2008).

Upon analysing the narratives in relation to resources and activities specifically, there were three salient themes that indicated a shared early years pedagogy amongst the participants, these were: access to open ended resources, active learning and outdoor learning. I look at each of these individually next.

Open-ended resources

Although resources had been an important theme when the participants discussed their childhood experiences, it was also significant when they talked about what they wanted to provide for the children in their current settings. Within the historical context of early years, resources have taken a key role. Some of the most influential pioneers in early years education that have had an influence on practice in England, such as Froebel and Montessori, have specifically discussed the resources children should have access to (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014). There are many objects and resources that are associated with early years education in the Western world (Gura, 1996; Jones et al., 2012). For example both Froebel and Montessori detailed the resources that children should have to explore (Jarvis et al., 2017). Froebel is perhaps most famous for his ‘gifts’, which were wooden blocks, but within his ‘occupations’ he also advocated playing with natural objects such as clay and sand (Liebschner, 1992; Lilley, 1967). These resources continue to be familiar activities that you will find in many early years settings in England. As well as specific objects and activities being inextricably linked with early years such as block play, painting, sand and water, young children use a whole range of everyday objects to support them in their meaning making and play. For example, a coat may suddenly become a superhero cape, a cardboard tube a pirate’s telescope. These objects can then just as quickly transform in something else, or back into their original function (Gura, 1996; Jones et al., 2012).

Therefore, due to the historical importance of resources, the key role that objects play in early years settings, and the significant childhood memories the participants had, it is perhaps not surprising that when the participants discussed their pedagogy, resources were a significant theme.

Both Jo and Helen refer to the importance of ‘stuff’. Jo says:

In terms of things, just anything that’s yeah open ended, I was gonna say ‘stuff’ but that’s not a very good word (Jo, first interview).

Helen also says:

Just lots of things. Lots of stuff. I think... a boxful of stuff for them to make things from (Helen, first interview).

In her second interview she reinforces this point, when she discusses the importance of the making area.

The ability to make, you know just having all of this and just having this kind of stuff and being able to make anything out of it and that thrill when they do (Helen, second interview).

Gura (1996) also uses the term ‘stuff’ in her book on resources for learning in early years, citing resources such as blocks and found materials, as key resources to support young children learning. She also highlights that there is a tradition in early years that certain materials such as paint, water and sand are key resources that should always be available and that this ‘conventional wisdom’ has been passed on through generations without being challenged.

Karen also sees the learning potential in found materials and perceives the making area as a key part of the classroom, saying ‘there’s so many things that you can create out of a box’. Rebecca also advocates the value in a box, stating

‘a cardboard box is one of the most precious resources you can have’. Rebecca also discussed the high importance she places on other open-ended resources.

My real passion is open-ended materials and children having things like the sand, the water, clay, blocks, you know all of that before worrying about whether they’ve touched a PC. You know. It’s having materials that they can use in ways that are interesting and important to them (Rebecca, first interview).

Rebecca trained at a Froebelian nursery and recalls this as having a significant impact on her pedagogy. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that she values natural resources such as water, clay and blocks, which were a key part of Froebel’s practice (Bruce, 2011). Rebecca’s passion for materials is clearly important to her, as she goes on to recall an incident at her current school, when setting up a new role play area with a colleague, she proceeded to add lots of plastic food, which Rebecca was ‘horrificed’ at. Rebecca’s ‘horror’ at pre-formed plastic food is perhaps because it feels at such odds with her strong beliefs about the importance of open ended materials. These beliefs have been formed from some key memories and experiences; her experience as a student and how inspired she was by the head teacher of the nursery and also her memory from childhood of being happiest when playing with a cardboard box. These pivotal experiences continue to be influential on her pedagogical beliefs and have helped to create the values she embraces.

Anne, Sarah, and Sophie want to move away from more preformed toys and see the value in more open ended resources. Anne shares her passion for real and open ended resources when she talks about the importance of her grandmothers sewing basket. For her, this represents the importance of having real objects to explore and not typical toys. She states, ‘you don’t need to have any toys to have

fun, to play and to learn'. Sarah also wants the children to have a 'variety of open ended resources'. She recalls in the past when resources were chosen for her class without her input. Some caterpillar outfits were ordered but she felt these limited the children, as 'you can only be a green caterpillar'. Sophie also sees the value in not having too many 'toys'. In her construction area she does have resources such as train tracks and duplo (building blocks) but says 'I think as much as all these lovely, expensive resources are important sometimes we just like to give them boxes, tubes and fabric and make dens'.

Grace discussed the importance of open ended materials for construction. In her second interview, she brought a selection of photos of children playing in the sand pit to represent the importance of 'found objects'. She had developed the sand area after observing some children playing in there.

I wanted to make the sand pit come alive and we had a lot of children that were interested in building and block play and doing it quite small scale, so I wanted to take it bigger and so each week I kind of added, found things, I just thought tyres were really evocative so we got a load of different shaped tyres and I got tubes and I got rope and I got pegs and I just introduced them slowly, so I didn't just kind of go there's a pile and then I was watching how you know how their play grew so you know we just started off with tyres and then lots of symbolic play came up, lots of chatting and negotiation and you know this was an oven that was a sculpture so it kind of ... the children used it how, where they were coming from.... the tyres were a great success and then I added the pipes and the pipes and the tyres and things started getting taller and I added the ropes I got really excited because there was so much different symbolic play and chat and negotiation (Grace, second interview).

Grace is able to articulate how the resources are supporting the children's learning, and she has carefully observed them as they played. The observation she shares is from the reflective diary she is keeping for the Froebel course she is

currently attending. This coupled with working in a Froebelian school appears to be impacting her pedagogical beliefs.

The participants appear to be able to provide the children they teach with the resources they feel are important. The fact that these resources are common features of early years classrooms, helps to support their beliefs, but as Sophie indicates, this is not always the case and more preformed plastic toys are also part of many early years classroom. Therefore, it seems that there are a range of influences informing the participants beliefs about resources, from the participants' personal pedagogy and the strong value that they place on resources, supported by strong childhood memories and historical influences within early years (Alexander, 2008).

Active Learning

There appeared to be a strong consensus amongst the participants' pedagogical beliefs that the best way for young children to learn is through real experiences and active learning. This resonates with more child centred view of education that has influenced early years policy and practice (Blundell, 2012). When there was a lack of focus in early years policy, one of the common principles laid out by the Early Childhood Education Forum, was the acknowledgment that 'young children learn best through play, first hand experiences and talk' (Early Childhood Education Forum 1997 cited in Curtis, 1998:19).

The importance of active learning also has a strong historical foundation. The first schools for young children, set up by pioneers such as Robert Owen (1771-1858) went against the tradition of rote learning and instead provided the children with opportunities to play and be active (Read, 2006). The development of the nursery school with opportunities for children to be active and play outside in the nursery garden, helped to continue to embed the importance of active learning for young children. This approach was very much influenced by Froebel's legacy and his emphasis on children playing and being actively engaged in their learning (Jarvis et al., 2017). Froebelian ideals of play, creativity, learning through first hand experiences and outdoor learning have influenced early years policy throughout the past century, including the current early years curriculum (Bruce, 2011), therefore it is perhaps not surprising that active learning was an important part of the participants' pedagogical beliefs.

Grace and Sarah talked about the importance of real life experiences. Both of them highlighted cooking as an important activity for the children to engage in. They both felt it is important as it encompasses all areas of learning. In Sarah's second interview she brings a bowl, wooden spoon and egg to represent the importance of cooking and real life experiences. She says:

It empowers them. So it's, it just encompasses everything cooking, it's literacy, maths, understanding of the world, it's talking about processes and change, it applies all those language opportunities, even children who can be a bit tricky, are fully immersed in it and they want to do the next thing...but also with the cooking it's so exciting, it's the children's favourite part of cooking and it's the fact that they can all do it. They've all got their own egg and they all crack their own egg, it's such an achievement, they're so pleased (Sarah, second interview).

Sarah continued the theme of real experiences in her second interview and also brought photographs of chicks hatching in the classroom and of the children gardening. She feels these experiences are making learning relevant, as she states:

How else would you teach them about say the life cycle...they can actually see it. They need to have experienced it before they can do anything else...I think our children need things like cooking and experience with pets and animals, being outside and talking about what they see (Sarah, second interview).

Anne also highlighted the importance of real experiences, citing activities such as woodwork and cooking as key. She says:

I want the children to have real experiences that one day they can look back on and actually think that was the start of developing life skills (Anne, second interview).

Anne also articulates the importance of active learning. She sees her role as being ‘creative’ and ‘thinking outside the box’ in order to make learning interesting. She gives the example of teaching maths, citing that mathematical learning can happen anywhere, from the painting table to the digging pit.

Kate also emphasised the importance of focusing on the practical side of learning. When she holds parent meetings, she feels it is important to help them understand the approach she takes. She says:

I talk openly about play, I talk about topic you know, topic learning approach, I talk about practical activities, I talk about, it has to be meaningful, it has to be in context too, for the children. And it has to look at how they learn, you have to factor in where their stage of development, you cannot make a child who cannot hold a pencil to write. If you stick that pencil in that child’s hand and their hand is not strong enough, only one thing will happen, it will hurt and that will switch them off (Kate, first interview).

When supporting children with their writing development, she gave examples of how she approaches this practically.

You know it is very much about them working practically, working the best way for them with what we do and yes we do fine motor skills activities, we do encourage hand strength, you know, writing area, but you know we do have writing and we do have things like envelopes, nice little notelets, you know, post it notes, things like that to encourage them and a big thing is that this week has been drawing maps, so they're wanting to pick up a pencil, they're wanting to you know draw a map which is, that's great, draw a map, perfect so, but then when we do do the phonics work we do try and work on the correct letter formation but we've got you know the sandpaper letters we've got marble letters, we do it on their backs in the sand, you know we do it with play dough, with clay so it's trying to do it in a ...different ways (Kate, first interview).

Kate's clear desire to support her children in their literacy development through practical, active experiences is evident from her discussion. As a reception teacher, the children in her class are expected to reach certain levels in literacy and numeracy. So despite the acknowledgement in the early years curriculum that children need to play and learn through active activities (DfE, 2017) the subject specific standards that children need to achieve at the end of the year suggest a more formal approach.

Sarah too voices the tension she feels within the curriculum and the pressure she is under to engage in more formal aspects of the curriculum. She states:

it's like you teach maths five times a week and it doesn't really matter what else you do but "make sure you do guided reading"... they never say have you cooked this half term, or taken the children out... I think our children need things like cooking and experience with pets and animals, being outside and talking about what they see and checking on things, I wouldn't stop doing it cause I know the value of it - even though it's not celebrated. (Sarah, second interview)

Reception teachers feeling the tension between the different expectations of the EYFS is documented in Wood's (1999) and Hudson and Keating's (2007)

research, and that tension is also apparent in Kate's and Sarah's discussions. Although there is a legacy of practical learning in the early years curriculum there is also an increased focus on children achieving specific targets in literacy and maths and this creates tensions and conflicting constructs within the early years curriculum (Robert-Holmes, 2015). Kate and Sarah appear to be able to manage these conflicting constructs within the curriculum. However, this is perhaps not the case for all reception teachers and it is possible to see how teachers could be confused or over whelmed by these pedagogical tensions (ibid.).

Outdoor Learning

The importance of outdoor learning was also a shared pedagogical belief and there were many references by the participants to the importance of outdoor learning throughout the interviews. Outdoor learning is of historical significance in early years education (Miller & Pound, 2011; Nutbrown & Clough, 2014) and within the current early years curriculum it is required that children have daily access to the outdoors (DfE, 2017). As discussed in chapter six, this was also a significant theme that emerged from the participants' discussions about childhood memories and research into adults' memories of play highlights outdoor memories as being some of the most prevalent memories (Henniger, 1994; Waite, 2007). Interestingly, the reference to outdoor learning was also evident in the participants' second interviews, with a number of participants bringing objects to represent the importance of outdoor learning. However, the participants articulated a range of different pedagogical reasons for outdoor learning being important in their settings, these included opportunities for risk

and challenge, freedom, the opportunity to get messy and the importance of connecting with nature.

Waite's (2007) research on childhood memories also highlighted the significance of outdoor memories. In her study, 334 staff from early years settings, primary schools and youth services responded to a questionnaire on childhood memories. 77% of the respondents shared outdoor memories, and similar to the participants of this study, different aspects of outdoor learning were recalled. The seven outdoor themes that emerged from Waite's study were; social aspects, natural contexts, active investigation (playful learning), adventure/risk/challenge, space/freedom, creativity and sensory experiences. Waite's study suggests that when memories are connected to a sensory experience, positive emotion or meaningful learning stronger memories are produced (ibid).

For Anne, her childhood memories were connected to risk and challenge through activities like woodwork. The importance of providing the children she taught with the opportunity for risk and challenge was a key part of her reason for valuing outdoor learning. In her first interview, Anne talked about the importance of risk and challenge and discussed how she was instrumental in acquiring the climbing frame in the garden, which was quite high and had a large pole for the children to slide down. In her second interview, she brought a photograph of the climbing frame to reinforce her belief about the importance of risk and challenge in the outdoor environment. She says:

I think children need to learn by their mistakes and need to be allowed to make mistakes and need to be offered challenges, be it physical be it mental where they really have to probably have two or three attempts at

something before they can figure out the best way to do it and I'm not one to go and run and step in (Anne, second interview).

Helen too felt it was important for the children to have risk. She reflected on how she believed children's outdoor experiences had changed over the generations. She felt it was important to be 'aware that children aren't getting those experiences, 'cause the parents are too afraid for them to climb up trees and climb up high'. Connected to giving the children risk and challenge, she felt it was also important to give the children freedom.

I think the freedom of being able to go out and explore out... and having places they can hide and not feel that we're watching them all the time. (Helen, first interview).

Helen recalled having a sense of freedom outdoors during her own childhood.

Sarah and Kelly also connected outdoor learning to freedom, but more in relation to the freedom to be messy.

I love seeing them outside like getting sort of messy. I just, yeah, sort of I think that they well obviously they've got to have boundaries because that's sort of part of the behaviour but I think I don't want to put any barriers really in their way and I just want them to kind of, you know, explore everything and as much as possible let them do what they want to do with their playing and, you know, I don't want to have to keep telling them to get out of the puddles (Kelly, first interview).

Sarah also said she was 'not worried about them making a mess'. She felt that if the children get wet or messy, then they could just change and it was more important to let them explore.

Mary and Emily felt some children were able to learn differently outside. Mary felt:

Some of them will get on their coats and boots and go outside to write and they'll be quite happy sitting there with a clipboard writing where they wouldn't really sit doing it in a different context so outside is really important. (Mary, first interview).

Emily also echoed this, when she stated:

How important it is actually for certain children to have that opportunity to go outside and how much more focused they could be in that different environment (Emily, first interview).

Both Emily and Mary bring objects to their second interview to represent the importance of outdoor play. Mary brings her wellington boots and Emily brings a picture of a tree.

Rebecca and Emily saw indoor learning and outdoor learning equally, and felt you could teach the entire curriculum outside. Rebecca says:

It goes without saying for me, you know, it's indoors outdoors, it's one and the same. Sand, water, lots of opportunities you know for physical play but again not just climbing and you know, incorporating into, if you've got the bikes out, maybe if the children have been interested in garages or pizza delivery. You know, we did it once where actually the children phoned the local pizza parlour and we had four pizzas delivered and then they acted it all out with... they were playing pizza delivery on the bikes (Rebecca, first interview).

For Grace, being outside was important as it allowed the children to connect to nature.

Being outside as much as possible, being in nature um going down to the woodland area and just climbing trees and you know doing the balance and all that, really important and they learn so much and they get so sure footed about things and confident (Grace, first interview).

From the examples above from nine of the participant's narratives, it appears that outdoor memories were strong memories and the clarity of these memories suggest that they have implications on the participants' pedagogical beliefs. As with other aspects of the participants' pedagogy, childhood memory appears to play an important role in why the participants value outdoor learning. The influence of the past along with the history of outdoor learning in early years and

the acknowledgement of the importance of outdoor learning in the early years curriculum, appears to make this a strong pedagogical belief amongst the participants.

Beliefs about children

Alongside a shared pedagogical belief in relation to the activities, resources and outdoor learning, the participants also articulated some key principles about how they view children. There were many parallels to their beliefs and this next section will explore some of these commonalities.

What came across strongly in the participants' narratives was their respect for the children they taught, their desire for the children to have a positive time in school, and that they viewed them as unique and wanted to support them individually. These beliefs could reflect the changing view of the child over time. Dahlberg et al. (1999) discuss the importance of considering how society is constructing the idea of the child and how the child is understood and conceptualised by society influences policy and practice in the field. The construction of the child has changed over time and has moved from seeing the child as needy to a capable learner. The EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017) to some extent resonates with this view, and highlights the importance of 'the unique child' who is 'resilient, capable, confident and self-assured (2017:6).

One key way that the participants supported and valued the children's uniqueness and individuality was through planning for the children's interests and allowing

them to have ownership over their learning. These beliefs resonated with the early years curriculum. The EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017) acknowledges that children need time for self-directed activity and that children should be viewed as unique, capable learners. Practitioners should also provide enabling environments that respond to children's individual needs and experiences.

Sarah talked about the importance of 'personalising learning' and supporting children in their interests and allowing them to follow their thinking. Mary, Anne, and Karen also highlighted the importance of following children's interests. Mary also felt it was important as an early years teacher to accept that the children are in control of their learning. She highlighted that some teachers find this difficult:

The children are in control of their learning and some teachers, they admit to me they couldn't do it 'cause they're not all sitting at the same place and doing the same things at the same time (Mary, first interview).

For the participants, not controlling the children's learning but letting them take control was very important. This appears to be an important pedagogical principle in early years, and as Mary points out one that does not come naturally to all teachers. The EYFS statutory framework acknowledges that children learn through 'leading their own play' and 'child-initiated activity' (2017:9) and this is also endorsed by key early years research projects, such as The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project which highlighted staff supporting children's freely chosen play as one of the pedagogic practices being used in the most effective early years settings (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2008). Key

policy documents and research validating a child-initiated approach to learning may well be supporting the participants in their pedagogical beliefs.

Helen and Rebecca echoed a similar point to Mary. Helen felt the children should have ownership over their learning.

I want them to feel that they own what they are doing. This is their environment. I really want to give them a sense of owning their learning and being a part of it and having the confidence to know that they're a part of it (Helen, first interview).

Rebecca also felt that it was not the adult who was in control. She saw her role as:

Extending their thinking through what they're doing rather than what I want them to do or what other people want them to do (Rebecca, first interview).

Grace also appeared to be comfortable with providing the children with control and ownership over their learning and saw her role as more of a facilitator. She says, 'I love being able to listen to the kids and letting them lead and just facilitating'.

Helen, Rebecca's and Grace's desire for children to have ownership over their environment and be in control of their learning, with adults on standby to extend their thinking and facilitate their learning, echoes the pedagogy of early years pioneers such as Froebel, who saw the adult's role as carefully observing and extending children's play and thinking (Tovey, 2013). These ideals of respect for children and a view that children are active authors of their own learning are evident in many of the early education pioneers' beliefs (Jarvis et al., 2017). This view of learning is also echoed in the EYFS (DfE, 2017). The socio-cultural principles within the EYFS encourage practitioners to extend children's thinking

and provide opportunities for child initiated learning (Robert-Holmes, 2012).

These embedded views on how children learn appear to have influenced the participants' approach to how they facilitate learning for the children in their settings. Leach and Moon (2008) argue that views on learning are an important dimension of pedagogy and that teachers need to be aware of how learning views elicit different types of pedagogical practice.

The participants also discussed the importance of school being a positive experience for the children in their settings. They saw having a positive experience as having fun and feeling safe and secure.

Sarah, Kelly and Karen felt it was important that school was fun for the children. Sarah tried to think of exciting activities to do with them and Karen wanted them to have opportunities to play and follow their interests. Kelly said 'I want them to enjoy coming into school. Like when they tell me they're having fun that kind of gives me a boost'.

Mary and Sophie wanted the children to have a positive view of school, and Sophie and Emily wanted them to feel 'safe' at school. This view echoes the participants' own school experiences, which were very positive. Both, Mary and Sophie recall a home culture that encouraged learning and respected school. This positive disposition towards school and seeing it as a good place to be, which was an established value in their childhood and has gone on to inform their pedagogy (Bourdieu, 1990).

Kate, Grace, Emily and Anne felt that nurturing was significant. They felt positive relationships and physical closeness was important, with Kate discussing that she wanted the children she taught to feel ‘enveloped in love’. Anne and Emily also articulated the importance they placed on nurturing, through the objects they brought to their second interview. Anne used a scarf to represent the importance of ‘warmth’ and Emily a heart to represent emotional connections and the importance of feeling ‘safe secure and loved’.

The strong connection between care and education which can be seen throughout the history of early years (Nutbrown & Clough, 2014) is perhaps why the participants feel that nurturing the children is important. Being nurturing and caring is also associated with working with young children (McGillivray, 2008) so it could be argued that the participants are fulfilling the role that is expected of them. Interestingly both Emily and Kate refer to the children feeling ‘loved’. Page (2011) argues that there is a place for ‘professional love’ in early years settings and connects this with Noddings’ (2003) notion of ethical caring.

An Early Years Identity

All of the participants identified themselves as early years teachers, even those who had previously taught older children felt they were now teaching in the place they felt most comfortable. This passion for early years and strong identification with being an early years teacher was evident in the participants’ narratives. Moyles (2001) highlights that early years practitioners often use words such as ‘passionate’ to describe their job and work with young children.

All the participants were strong advocates for early years education and there was a sense that at times they needed to stand up and defend their identity. The participants gave examples of how they had to protect their identity in situations when they did not feel as valued as they should have.

Nias (1989) highlights how for many teachers, their profession is a vocation or a calling and with this comes emotional investment. There was evidence of this commitment in some of the participants' narratives. Sarah and Kate both said they 'love' early years. Sophie said her 'heart was in early years' and Helen liked the 'excitement' of early years. Anne felt that early years was 'the most important stage' in education and saw it as a 'specialism'. Kate echoed Anne's point when she said:

I believe passionately, the early years is so significant because if you get it right in the early years, if you develop that independence, that love of learning, that love of school, you know the ability to explore or investigate, solve problems, not be fearful of mistaking mistakes, if you get it right in the early years then that will stand the children, OK yes things happen along the way but this stands them in jolly good stead (Kate, first interview).

What was also evident was the need to defend early years and advocate for it, as the participants felt early years was different to other year groups and was also misunderstood and often neglected. In the past, early years had been neglected politically (Pugh, 2010). When the education system was restructured following the 1988 Education Reform Act with the introduction of the National Curriculum, early years was overlooked (Robert-Holmes, 2012). The ethos of the National Curriculum has been on teaching knowledge rather than skills and has created a hierarchy of subjects, which is opposite to early years philosophies that emphasise play and exploration (Wood, 2007). Some believe that early years is

over shadowed by the view that working with young children is connected to being caring and maternal (McGillivray, 2008) and this link with domestic and emotional work of child rearing contributes to its low status (Francis & Skelton, 2009). Therefore, the ongoing curriculum conflicts within early years and the national curriculum, coupled with the low status image of the early years practitioner could well lead the participants to feel neglected and also having to defend early years pedagogy. This echoes Hodson and Keating's (2007) research that highlighted that the early years teachers they interviewed had to 'battle to maintain good early years practice' (2007:68).

Some of the participants had taught older children before they came to early years. Not only did they note the different approach in early years compared to higher up the school but also how early years had changed over time. Anne, Mary, and Sophie had taught in Key Stage One (5-7 year olds) before teaching in early years felt the curriculum was more formal in Key Stage One. The differences in the pedagogical approaches between Reception and Year One is highlighted in Fisher's (2009) paper which explores the transition between Reception and Year One. Results from the questionnaires showed that the formality of Year One, with children not having enough time to play was of particular concern to both Year One and Reception teachers. Anne likes the 'freedom and spontaneity' in early years and does not feel this could work higher up due to the restrictions on the curriculum. Mary has been teaching in early years for seven years. She initially remembers it being much more 'formal' but since the introduction of a statutory curriculum feels it has changed. Although she believes she has been lucky as the deputy head and head were keen to move

away from the more formal reception class and embrace the EYFS (DfE, 2017) curriculum. When Sophie taught in Year One, she felt the timetable was very ‘squished’. She says:

I wanted to be able to spend, you know I had children who weren’t confident readers and writers and yet we were having to plod on through history or geography units and actually we could have done a lot more, spent a lot more time on other areas to really build their confidence in key skills while making it fun and that’s why I really wanted to move to reception because I thought actually if we get the foundations right then the children go up to year 1 so much more confident and capable of coping with the year 1 curriculum (Sophie, first interview).

Like Mary, Sophie feels she has been able to teach in early years in the way she has wanted to. This has been due to being listened to by her head teacher, but also by changing and adapting as she has gained more experience. She does feel that being in a primary school means there is ‘top down pressure’ due to ‘the data driven structure that we have with Ofsted and with league tables’. The current political agenda, sees education as a commodity (Moss, 2014) therefore, the culture of accountability in education is high. Robert-Holmes (2015) argues that the increased ‘datafication’ of early years creates tensions within the early years curriculum and is at odds with the more holistic view of the child that the curriculum promotes. Reception teachers in particular are under top down pressure to prepare children for year one, as Sophie highlights and this can lead to early years teachers having to fight to maintain good early years practice against the downward pressure of a more formal curriculum (Hodson & Keating, 2007).

Some of the participants felt isolated within their schools. Kelly felt she was sometimes ‘forgotten about’ due to being in nursery and in a separate building to

the rest of the school. Sophie also commented that ‘We are completely on a limb, literally, the bit of the building that sticks out’. Kelly felt that the school focussed much more on Key Stage 1, although she felt this was more to do with ‘government pressure’ than the school. In meetings she sometimes thinks:

I sometimes sit there and think Oh there’s no point you being here ‘cause it is all just Key Stage 1 focused or reception focused, so, I think Early Years is valued but not as much as Key Stage 1 (Kelly, first interview).

Sophie echoed a very similar point to Kelly. She too often felt neglected in meetings:

But often it is a case of ‘oh here’s some handouts for years 1 to 6, oh reception don’t have anything for you’ or ‘in reception you could do an easier version of year 1’. It’s not right (Sophie, first interview).

Again, like Kelly she did not see this as the fault of the school but more to do with the political climate:

It’s nobody’s fault, it’s just that in a primary school, you know we’ve got such a nationwide now focus around data and year 6 results, and progress from Key Stage 1 stats to Key Stage 2 stats ...(Sophie, first interview).

The feeling of ‘neglect’ that the participants experienced, again seems indicative of the differences between the early years curriculum and the national curriculum, with the high focus on progress and attainment within the national curriculum meaning that the older year groups gain more attention (Fisher, 2009; Robert-Holmes, 2012).

Participants also shared examples where other colleagues showed a lack of understanding of early years, or early years was seen as a less important part of the school. Mary shared this point:

The most difficult thing is that the other teachers within the school find early years a total mystery and they sort of get to the door and they look in the door and they think ‘Oh well yeah we’re not quite sure what you’re

doing but you're telling me that you're doing maths and you're telling me that you're doing ... yeah alright then we'll take your word for it' sort of thing (Mary, first interview).

Sarah was moved by her head teacher from Year Two to EYFS as it was felt she was not doing a good job. At the time she felt like she had been 'demoted' and the opinion was 'Oh you're not good enough to teach top end'.

Kate also experienced a feeling of hierarchy in the system. Kate initially taught through the whole primary range before then going on to teach in early years. She finds that sometimes people do not understand her choice. 'I think the most frustrating thing I find sometimes is people who (say) 'Ohh you've got the little ones, are you going to move higher up the school again'.

The reason the participants had these experiences could be to do with wider societal factors and how the image of early years education and early years teachers has been constructed within society (Burr, 2003). The image of early years teachers is often linked to a caring and mothering role, which does not give them high status within the education profession (Taggart, 2011). Equally, the length of time it took for early years to get a statutory curriculum, the dualism of care and education in early years and the child centred view of early years has helped to create an image that is more caring and social and less academic.

The evidence of hierarchy in the school system could be a result of the differences in the early years curriculum and the national curriculum. The developmental view of education, which has been established in early childhood education is an alternative to the traditionalist view that is endorsed in

educational policy and practice (Fisher, 2009; Hodson & Keating, 2007). The importance that is placed on certain aspects of the curriculum such as testing, gives the older phases of primary education more status.

These pedagogical tensions that exist within the teaching profession (Robert-Holmes, 2015; Wood, 2004) suggest that early years teachers need to create a strong identity for themselves, and also be in a position to confidently articulate their pedagogical beliefs in order to have a strong voice within their settings.

Summary

This chapter explored how the participants developed their pedagogy once they became teachers. It highlighted the importance of developing a reflective approach and how this helps to shape pedagogical beliefs (Moyles et al., 2002, 2002a). There was evidence to show that various factors supported the participants in pedagogical reflection and that they were able to move away from a more technical approach to teaching to a more instinctive approach (Birmingham, 2012; Willis, 2008).

Some of the shared pedagogical principles that arose from the participants' life histories were explored and it appeared that the influence of wider historical and political influences of early childhood education were influential as well as experiences from the participants' childhoods (Alexander, 2008)

The pedagogical tensions within the early years curriculum meant that the participants had to be strong advocates for their phase of education but also at times felt misunderstood or sidelined (Robert-Holmes, 2012).

This is the concluding analysis of findings chapter, so I now turn to the final chapter, where I will draw together the key findings from this study and discuss implications and limitations of the research project.

CHAPTER NINE:

A discussion of the findings and implications of the study

Introduction

This chapter will draw together the findings from this study. The research questions will be used to frame this chapter and the key findings and salient points from the research will be presented. The contribution that this study makes to the field will also be highlighted, as will recommendations for the early years profession. Limitations of the study will also be addressed.

What are the key influencing factors that shape the formation of pedagogical beliefs in female early years teachers?

The evidence from the data revealed that there was a range of factors that influenced how the participants formed their pedagogical beliefs. These included influences from the participants' past, upbringing and background, their training and their current schools, their maternal and gender identity and political and historical influences. The findings support the understanding of pedagogy and its multi-faceted nature (Alexander, 2008) and highlights how many different aspects of a teacher's life and experience can help to shape their pedagogical beliefs. This study particularly highlighted the content of the varied factors influencing early years teachers' pedagogical beliefs. As I gained a greater understanding of the varying factors influencing the participants' pedagogical beliefs and the content of those factors, I found Moyles et al.'s (2002) image of

unpeeling pedagogical layers useful, and as I analysed and thought about the participants' life histories I could distinctly see the many layers to their pedagogical beliefs.

I would therefore argue that undertaking a life history approach clearly supported my ability to explore the range of factors that influenced the formation of the participants' pedagogical beliefs. The ability to talk to the participants about various aspects of their personal and professional lives enabled me to consider how specific aspects of identity, policy and history had influenced their beliefs (Coles & Knowles, 2001; Goodson & Sikes, 2008). Life history acknowledges the importance of the individual, but locates their experiences within a wider social context, thus aligning itself with the social constructionist paradigm that framed this study.

A life history approach also supported my desire to share the stories of female early years teachers. The approach reinforced the argument that in order to know more about who teachers are, then they need to be the focus of research, as Day et al. state 'teachers matter' (2007:1). From a feminist perspective, the method enabled the women's lived experiences to become visible (Middleton, 1992) and provided an opportunity to hear an often un-heard section of the educational community (Goodson & Sikes, 2008).

Conducting two interviews with the participants and using objects as a focus to support pedagogical reflection in the second interview, also helped to highlight the multi faceted nature of the participants' pedagogical beliefs. The objects and

the conversation and reflection attached to them allowed the participants to explore memory and identity (Ahuvia, 2005; Hurdley, 2006; Plummer, 2001) and added another layer to the participant's life histories. In some cases the data from the second interview helped to confirm findings from the first and reinforced what the participants had been discussing. For example, in Emily's case, her current job working with families in a Children's Centre had highlighted to her the importance of child development and secure foundations. She reinforced these points in her second interview when she chose a brick to represent the firm foundations children need and a heart to emphasise the importance she places on secure attachments and emotional connections.

In other cases, the second interview provided an opportunity to find out something new about the participants' pedagogy that had not been discussed in depth in the first interview. For example, in Helen's first interview she briefly mentioned her father in relation to how he had influenced her musical interest. However, it was during the second interview when she shared some photographs that her father had taken, that she then talked in much more detail about how he had influenced her, particularly through his creativity and nurturing characteristics. The photographs were evocative and supported her in sharing her thoughts and feelings (Turkle, 2007), providing a greater understanding of aspects of her pedagogy.

Employing a life history approach also supported the importance of providing early years teachers with the opportunity to engage in pedagogical reflection (Moyle et al., 2002; Stephen, 2010). Through analysis of the data there was

evidence to show that by engaging in reflective practice the participants had developed their pedagogical beliefs. The theory of phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Willis, 2008) provided a useful tool in identifying where the participants had moved from a more technical and practical approach to being able to make decisions based on instinct and good judgement (Birmingham, 2012). Some of the participants described their ability to become more instinctive in their practice. For Jo, it was her up bringing and also engaging in pedagogical discussion with her colleague that supported her instinctive approach. Kate felt it was a combination of personal experience and also the length of time that she had been in the profession that had helped her innate approach. For Grace and Emily, the culture of their settings, the institutional habitus of their schools (Reay, 1989) encouraged them to engage in theory and research. Emily highlighted how the culture in her setting of valuing outdoor learning had changed how she viewed how children learn outside, therefore shifting in her pedagogical thinking. Her recent training on brain development and attachment had also provided her with new knowledge that was adding to her pedagogy. Emily raised an important point when reflecting on the training she had received, stating that it was her professional responsibility to actively engage and reflect on new ideas, highlighting the key part that personal agency plays in a teacher's ability to reflect and engage in their own thinking (Bruner, 1996).

The length of time that the participants had been teaching also appeared to impact on their ability to be more reflective and instinctive in their teaching (Birmingham, 2004). The confidence that came with teaching for a longer period of time seemed to give the participants a sense of conviction that they were doing

was right. Anne articulated this as self-belief and felt that the positive response she got from the children, parents and colleagues supported her belief that she was getting it right. Although the less experienced teachers did not display quite as much confidence as the more experienced teachers, there was clear evidence of them beginning to reflect on their pedagogy as they acknowledged that they were still developing. Sarah saw herself as a developing teacher and was aware that she needed to actively engage in reading and new ideas in order to develop her teaching.

It appeared from the participants' discussions around their teacher training, that during training the more technical and practical aspects of teaching, such as the school placements, were the most influential part with not as much focus on discussion, theory and pedagogical reflection. The participants were fortunate in their careers to have had other opportunities to engage in reflective practice through their settings, training and colleagues. However, not all teachers will have these opportunities. Therefore, this raises questions about the content of teacher training courses and suggests that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on thinking and talking about pedagogical beliefs. I will return to this later on in the chapter when I make recommendations.

There were key pedagogical principles that the participants articulated, that had been influenced by the historical and political context of early years education. Although in early years it was only in 2012 that a statutory curriculum was introduced, due to the significant historical legacy of early years education in England, certain pedagogical principles have been embedded in early years

practice (Miller & Pound, 2011). Within the participants' narratives, there were common themes and similarities in their pedagogical beliefs in relation to the experiences they wanted the children they taught to have and how they viewed the child.

One area that appeared to be significant to the participants' pedagogical beliefs was the resources and activities that they wanted their children to engage with. Key pioneers of early education, such as Froebel and Montessori were particularly influential at the start of the 20th century when education for young children was being to develop and become part of the political agenda. Some of the activities and resources that the educational pioneers were advocating over a hundred years ago were the same as the ones the participants valued (Gura, 1996; Jones et al., 2012) such as block play and sand. The participants placed particular importance on children playing with open ended resources rather than pre-formed toys. They also showed a clear value and preference for real life activities such as cooking and gardening.

Another area that the participants discussed which was a shared pedagogical principle was the value they placed on outdoor learning. Similar to certain activities being associated with early years education, outdoor learning also has a key place in early years history (Bruce, 2011). Again, Froebel is influential here with his establishment of the kindergarten but also pioneers like the McMillan sisters who helped to establish the first nursery school in England in 1913, also placed emphasis on outdoor learning, particularly in connection to physical health (Jarvis et al., 2017). The Early years curriculum (EYFS) (DfE, 2017) now

states that all early years settings should have outdoor access. Interestingly, outdoor memories were also a significant theme when the participants were discussing their childhoods. It seems therefore, that the importance that the participants placed on outdoor learning had been reinforced by a range of influencing factors, from their own biographies and also from history and policy.

Early years policy was slow to develop in England and evidence shows that the more child centred, developmental approach of early years was at odds with the more didactic model that was being advocated for in other educational phases (Kwon, 2002; Wood, 2007). The EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2017) in many ways represents two educational views. The child centred view is evident in the focus on the unique child, characteristics of learning, active learning and child initiated learning. However, the subject specific, target learning approach of the national curriculum is also present in the curriculum being broken down into areas of learning and children progressing through monthly bands in order to achieve set learning goals (Hodson & Keating, 2007; Roberts-Holmes, 2015). The participants articulated aspects of these pedagogical tensions when discussing their classroom practice. Some of the participants who taught in reception classes acknowledged the 'top down' pressure from above. Kate was keen to educate 'her parents' about the importance of play and not making children write too soon. Sarah felt frustrated that it was only the children's development in maths and literacy that the school leaders were interested in. There was also a sense from some of the participants that due to being in early years they were overlooked or not seen as important as other year groups, as the current emphasis on progress and attainment within the National Curriculum meant that the older year

groups got more attention (Fisher, 2009; Robert-Holmes, 2012). Due to dealing with certain pedagogical tensions and at times being neglected within their school settings, there was a feeling from the participants' narratives that they had to be able to confidently articulate their pedagogical beliefs.

Despite the pedagogical tensions in the curriculum, it was the more developmental, child centred approach that appeared to have the most significant impact on the participants' pedagogy. Although in many ways the participants felt that the curriculum was not especially influential to their pedagogy and practice, what they did value was the opportunity for the children to engage in their own learning and follow their interests. This pedagogical approach is unique to the early years curriculum (EYFS) (DfE, 2017) and very different to the style of learning that goes on in older year groups. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising when some of the participants reported feeling that their colleagues did not understand or value early years (Robert-Holmes, 2012).

The participants discussed the importance they placed on planning for the children's interests and allowing them to have ownership over their learning. For example, Sarah talked about the importance of 'personalising learning'. Mary, Anne, and Karen highlighted the importance of following the children's interests. Mary also felt it was important as an early years teacher to accept that the children are in control of their learning. The EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2017) acknowledges that children need time for self-directed activity and that children should be viewed as unique, capable learners. Practitioners should also provide enabling environments that respond to children's individual needs and

experiences. These pedagogical principles are based on a socio-cultural model that underpins the EYFS curriculum (Robert-Holmes, 2017). This more contemporary view of the child is seeing children as independent and capable learners and this view appears to be resonating with the participants' pedagogical beliefs.

Evidence from the data showed that the participants were able to reject the parts of the curriculum that did not fit with their pedagogical beliefs, again showing evidence of a reflective approach and the ability to trust personal judgment over procedure (Willis, 2008). This was particularly true of the more experienced teachers who felt confident enough to trust their own instincts and beliefs rather than rely on the curriculum. The less experienced teachers saw the curriculum as useful and a good reference point for what they wanted the children to learn. For the early career teachers who were perhaps still at the more technical stage of teaching, the procedural elements of the curriculum appeared to be more useful (Birmingham, 2012).

How does the participants' gender identity influence the formation of their pedagogical beliefs?

Findings from the data showed that there were certain aspects of the participants' gendered identity that had been particularly significant in influencing their pedagogical beliefs. Evidence from the participants' narratives suggested that they had been influenced by certain femininities in their childhood that had shaped the participants' understanding of their professional role (Symulan,

2004). It was the dominant discourses of femininity that construct female teachers as being caring and emotional that had helped to shape the participants understanding of what it means to be an early years teacher (Burr, 2003).

Some of the participants had been drawn to teaching at a young age and had been influenced by female teachers and relatives. Women who teach young children have come to be described in ways that focus much more on their caring characteristics (Skelton & Francis, 2009; Symulan 2004) and when recalling memorable teachers from their childhoods, the dispositions that the participants remembered were linked to their social and emotional characteristics, such as being 'calm', 'lovely' and 'creative'. Other participants had been influenced by female relatives and wanted to have a vocational job too. Some of the reasons given for wanting to be a teacher were connected to helping others and enjoying being with children.

Another aspect that appeared to be particularly influential was a maternal identity and this appeared to be influenced by the participants' own mothers and grandmothers and also their experience of becoming mothers themselves. The mothering practices that the participants valued resonated with the socially constructed image of the good middle class mother (Ailwood 2008; Osgood, 2012) and this maternal image has historical roots in early years education (Steedman, 1985). The image that the participants depicted of their own mothers and grandmothers also resonated with the caring, maternal role of a teacher. In the next section, I will particularly discuss how the participants were influenced by their family background. However, what was interesting was how heavily

mothers featured in the participants' discussions of their own childhoods. The participants particularly talked about the activities they did with their mothers, such as playing outside, cooking, gardening which suggested an image of a mother who was caring and actively engaged with raising her children. Although it was mothers and grandmothers who featured most heavily in the participants' childhood memories, fathers and grandfathers were also mentioned. Both the men and women in the participants' childhoods will have been influential in shaping their gender identity.

The maternal characteristics that some of the participants had been exposed to during their childhood had shaped their gendered dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990) and they had then gone on to reproduce these values within their teaching. With the ideal image of the good mother, endorsed in early years teaching it was possible for the participants to continue to recreate the mothering practices from their childhoods in their classrooms. If, as Osgood (2012) highlights, the normalising discourses of motherhood in early years education promotes the virtues of the good, sensitive mother, then how do teachers, mothers, children and families that do not identify with this image fit into early years? For the participants in this study these mothering practices sat comfortably with them. Even for participants such as Kate, who did not grow up with this type of maternal influence, once she was able to eventually teach and mother in the way she wanted to, it was these maternal characteristics she was drawn to. I would concur with Osgood (*ibid.*), when she suggests that these established maternal discourses limit the identities of the women who work in early years. Therefore,

understanding pedagogical development is one way that these beliefs can be challenged and better understood.

What was significant from analysing the data was how the participants' own maternal identity had influenced their pedagogical beliefs and within the participants' narratives there were many references to motherhood. Out of the twelve participants, nine of the women were mothers and one was expecting her first child. A number of the participants made a direct link between their maternal and professional identities (Hauver-James, 2010; Thomas & Kehily, 2011).

Grace provided an interesting example of how influential her maternal identity had been in shaping her pedagogical beliefs. She felt her views on, and interest in, education were awakened by her mothering. One of the ways that her maternal identity manifested itself in her teaching was through food and the importance she placed on domestic routines (Grumet, 1988). She saw snack time and cooking as a way to nurture and care for the children and through these homely connections the children would feel warm and secure. She had been influenced by Froebelian principles and the way she described her role echoed the 'motherly direction' that Froebel had envisaged in the Kindergarten (Brehony, 2000).

Kate also saw her maternal identity having a direct impact on her pedagogy. She felt she lacked emotional warmth when she was growing up. When she had her own children, mothering in what she perceived to be the right way was

incredibly important to her, and had impacted on her teaching. She saw loving and protecting the children as an important way of making them feel emotionally secure. Other examples of enacting a caring role were also shared. For example, Emily wanted the children to feel safe and secure and having a physical closeness with the children was important to her. Mary felt becoming a mother had given her a more nurturing perspective towards the children. The participants' notions of caring were mostly connected to maternal caring. However, Helen recalled some of her father's characteristics and described him as 'gentle, kind and nurturing'. She felt that it was these dispositions, alongside his musicality and creativity that had impacted on her teaching. There are many ways to understand caring, not just from a maternal perspective (Noddings, 2003) and Taggart (2011) argues that traditional connection between caring and mothering is outdated. This concurs with Vogt's (2002) study which highlighted that caring within teaching can be seen in many different ways, not just as caring connected to mothering. Both the male and female teachers in this study committed to acts of caring. Therefore, if teachers have a greater understanding of their pedagogy then they may be able to challenge some of these established beliefs connected to caring and understand it in a broader way.

The participants' maternal identity had clearly impacted on their pedagogy. However, the mothering image that has been constructed around women who teach young children had also been influential. The maternal discourses that have shaped the role of early years teachers have come from history (Ailwood, 2008; Osgood, 2012). The focus on care and education that was established by educationalists such as the McMillan sisters has helped to associate working in

early years as being linked to a caring and domestic role. This dualism of education and care, and private and state sector has perhaps helped to create a 'cosy' image (Kwon, 2002) of early years and perpetuate the caring, maternal image of the past.

For four of the participants, becoming mothers directly impacted their decision to become teachers. Mary, Anne, Karen and Jo had their own children and then started working with children as it fitted in with their role as mothers. It was through the experiences of helping out at playgroups, becoming a child minder and working as a teaching assistant that they then decided to become teachers. For Anne and Karen, who had left school at 16 and went to work, this provided them with the opportunity to get a degree. Through becoming a mother and working with children, which are seen as caring, social jobs, they then went on to gain a profession and a successful career.

What role does early childhood and family background play in shaping the participants' pedagogical beliefs?

Findings from the data showed that early childhood and family background played a significant part in shaping the participant's pedagogical beliefs.

Evidence from the participants' life histories indicated that their childhood, family background and schooling experiences had had a role in shaping their pedagogy.

Drawing on Bourdieu's conceptual tool of habitus (1977; 1990) to support analysis, was beneficial in highlighting the influence of the participants' family habitus on the formation of their pedagogical beliefs. It also revealed the connection between the past and present and the significance of the historical roots of habitus and how it manifests itself in the present (Bourdieu, 1977). This was visible in how the participants carried some of the values and dispositions from their childhood into their pedagogy and thus into their classroom practice. Utilising a life history approach, also helped to highlight the connection between past and present. This was evident in the second interview with the participants bringing objects to discuss that had a link to their past and childhood. Some participants selected objects that were directly autobiographical, for example, Anne chose her grandmother's sewing basket. Whereas other participants selected objects that were not directly autobiographical but had a biographical link. For example, Kelly's mud pie represented the importance she placed on getting messy and being outdoors and this linked to a significant childhood memory of playing with mud pies.

Analysis of the data revealed that there appeared to be a number of significant aspects of the participants' childhoods that had influenced their pedagogical beliefs. The influence of their upbringing, with particular reference to parenting practices and how they were brought up was discussed. Memories of activities, resources they had to play with and outdoor memories also appeared to be significant and some participants discussed the influence of their own schooling.

When recalling how they were raised and their upbringing, the participants particularly shared memories of their mothers and grandmothers. When

considering their pedagogy, some of the participants recalled the maternal characteristics that they had been exposed to in their childhood. Jo's was aware that the parenting practices established by her grandmother had gone on to influence her mother and then herself. This provided an interesting example of the ability of habitus to move from one generation to the next (Bourdieu, 1977; 1990). Jo drew upon the maternal characteristics inherited from her mother and grandmother in her teaching and recalling how she was raised helped her be confident in the classroom.

Sophie was also aware of the continuity of maternal influence in her family. Her mother had made a positive impact on her, not only in how she was raised and the experiences she had as a child, but also how she juggled motherhood and her career but still had lots of time for her family. Sophie linked her mothers parenting style back to how she was raised by Sophie's grandmother. At the time of interview, Sophie was expecting her first baby and hoped she would be able to continue the parenting values established in her family.

The activities and the type of resources that the participants engaged with during their childhoods also appeared to then impact on their pedagogy, with participants wanting to create similar experiences for the children in their settings.

Anne's objects were very much linked to her childhood experiences and how she was raised. She spent a lot of time with her grandparents as a child and engaged in many first hand experiences with them, such as sewing, baking, gardening and

woodwork. One of the values that she had taken from her upbringing was the importance of children having real experiences and also risk and challenge. The sewing basket, photograph of the woodwork bench and the climbing frame that she brought to her second interview all represented these values.

Anne described how she was able to continue these values from her childhood in her current setting. For example, she had a woodwork bench in her classroom and she liked the fact that the new climbing frame in the garden had a high pole to provide more challenge for the children. This also demonstrates another way that the historical roots of habitus can impact on the present. As Bourdieu states 'a past that survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles' (1977:82). One of the reasons that Anne can perpetuate her values in her setting is due to the institutional habitus of her school resonating with her own personal habitus (Reay et al., 2004).

There were other examples of participants teaching in settings that were aligned with their habitus and thus with their pedagogical beliefs. Karen came from a supportive, close family and saw the children she taught as an extension of her family. The family atmosphere of the school she taught in was very appealing to her and one of the reasons she liked teaching there. This suggests that the settings that the participants taught in could help to reinforce and perpetuate values established from their childhood, (Reay et al., 2001) therefore helping to establish them as a key part of their pedagogical beliefs.

Another example of the influence of institutional habitus was during the participants' discussions about their own schooling. For some participants, the habitus of the home resonated with the values of the school. For example, Mary and Sophie came from a home background that encouraged learning and saw school as a positive experience. They liked learning and feeling challenged and went on to achieve at school. Their positive attitude to school and learning established at home was reflected in the learning culture in their schools (Thomas, 2002). However, in certain institutions depending on the institutional habitus of that environment and whether it fits with the individual's familiar habitus, the individual will either feel included or excluded (Reay et al., 2001; 2009; Thomas, 2002). Anne's narrative provided an example of how schools can exclude certain pupils. She had a happy experience at primary school but then had a shock when she moved to Grammar school. The school was very formal and the expectation was to go to university. These values did not appear to fit with the values that Anne describes from her home life, which was focused on more practical learning. Anne also describes herself as coming from a working class background, where there was no expectation to go to university. The values of her home life appeared to be at odds with the values of the school. It is perhaps not surprising that she chose not to finish her A levels and was not supported by her school when she wanted to pursue a less academic route.

It should be noted that not all of the participants discussed their childhood and background in depth. For example, Emily did not have any significant memories about her childhood. Other participants did talk about their upbringing, but then discussed how they had chosen not to continue the values from their childhood.

For example, in Kate's case, she talked about 'breaking the mould' from her childhood. Her childhood had impacted on her pedagogical beliefs, in that she actively wanted to move away from some of her childhood values. This was an example of where the habitus has transformed and not been confined to the values of childhood (Thomas, 2002). The habitus can be re structured through further socialisation and encounters with the social world (Meisenhelder, 2006), and this is what Kate had been able to do. Significant experiences such as going to University, having positive teaching practices and then a career where she had been trusted and allowed to teach in the way she wanted to, appears to have helped her move away from the values of her familial habitus.

Manton reminds us that teachers' dispositions change and evolve over time (2012). This too is the case of pedagogical beliefs as they develop over time. Due to our pedagogy being multi faceted many different aspects of a teachers' experience will have all helped to shape their pedagogy. Therefore, although childhood appears to be significant in helping to form pedagogical beliefs there will then be many more experiences and outside factors that will build upon this.

The significance placed on childhood with regard to shaping pedagogical beliefs, reinforced that the past is influential on pedagogical development and Pajares (1992) highlights childhood as a time when educational belief structure is being formed. Both Pajares (1992) and Rath (2001) argue that a greater focus on teacher beliefs is important as this will impact on teacher training. Rath (2001) suggests that it needs to be acknowledged that trainee teachers have been forming their pedagogical beliefs prior to becoming teachers, therefore training

programmes need to acknowledge this and find ways to challenge and discuss these beliefs. I would concur with this argument and from the participants' life histories it was clear that they were already developing beliefs on areas such as how to teach children and how children learn and the right activities and resources for them to access.

Now that the key findings of the study have been presented I will now consider some of the limitations of the research and make recommendations for further research possibilities.

The research reviewed

I am aware that participants in this study are not representative of all female early years teachers. The twelve teachers who contributed to this study were all white and from working and middle class backgrounds and were teaching in the South of England. Therefore, from this small sample of participants, I do not claim to make any generalisations, but offer an account of a specific 'group of lives' (Letherby, 2003). A life history approach advocates a small sample size in order to provide the opportunity to generate data that has depth and richness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Goodson & Sikes, 2008). The advantage of a small sample size meant the depth of interviewing necessary to explore biographical influence was achieved. A further area of study could be a comparative study of groups of early years teachers from different backgrounds or counties. A study including male early years teachers would provide the opportunity to explore the differences and similarities in pedagogical beliefs between male and female

teachers. Further studies that include a larger sample size could utilise methods such as focus groups or group interviews.

I believe the approach I undertook was successful in a number of respects. The data gathered from both interviews was very detailed. Utilising a second interview with the participants bringing objects and photographs to aid discussion added to the richness of the data, and helped to expand on areas raised in the first interview. The objects supported the participants in telling their life stories (Hurdley, 2006). The high quality of the data generated suggests that an interview approach was the most appropriate method for this study. Although life history interviewing is seen as a useful and appropriate method in education, (Goodson and Sikes, 2008) life history interviewing using objects is more common in other fields (Ahuvia, 2005; Hurdley, 2006). I would suggest that this method warrants further investigation within educational research as it has the capacity to generate exciting and interesting data.

This study has also highlighted some matters that warrant further consideration from early years teachers, schools, teacher training institutions and policy makers. At an individual level, early years teachers need to actively engage in training and pedagogical discussion in order to gain a greater understanding of their own pedagogy and to continue to develop in their teaching. If they have a better understanding of their pedagogy and how that has developed, then they will be better able to explore and challenge their beliefs.

At a school level, settings need to provide early years teachers with the opportunity to develop their pedagogy. The participants in this study had benefitted from attending training and courses, working with other colleagues and early years advisors. Therefore, having opportunities to engage in professional development appears to be an important part of continuing pedagogical growth. Some of the participants felt isolated and neglected in their settings therefore, schools need to value early years and gain a greater understanding of the pedagogical principles within early years education. If early years teachers are to be seen on an equal footing to their colleagues then they will be more confident to articulate, share and develop their pedagogical beliefs.

When the participants in this study began their teacher training, they had already been forming their pedagogical beliefs. Their childhoods, schooling and family backgrounds had been shaping their ideas and values. This has implications for the institutions that provide teacher training and suggests that student teachers need opportunities to discuss and explore their pedagogical beliefs, particularly as aspects of their pedagogy may not yet be fully understood. I would suggest that the life history method of using objects to evoke discussion of pedagogical beliefs could be a suitable method to use with trainee teachers as a way to begin to challenge and discuss beliefs.

The participants in this study highlighted the tensions within the early years curriculum. Although the participants favoured a play based curriculum, which is also advocated in the EYFS (DfE, 2017) they were also aware of the subject specific standards children had to achieve at the end of the Reception year. For

the study participants, the different expectations of the EYFS (DfE, 2017) caused frustration. I would argue that these conflicting messages could also lead to pedagogical confusion and leave teachers questioning their pedagogy and practice. I suggest that policy makers need to address the conflicting constructs within the curriculum. I would also urge policy makers to consult early years practitioners so their views help to inform policy. The participants in this study show that early years teachers have a strong pedagogical understanding and as the people who are delivering the curriculum, I would argue their opinions should be heard.

Concluding remarks

This study has highlighted the complexity of early years teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the many different facets that influence pedagogical formation (Alexander, 2008; Leach & Moon, 2008). For the participants in this study, there were many different aspects that seemed to be particularly influential in shaping their pedagogical beliefs and this study has particularly highlighted the significance of childhood and childhood memories, mothers and grandmothers, schooling, motherhood, training, history and policy in shaping this group of teachers' pedagogy.

I have learned much through this research. Through studying the twelve participants' life histories with regard to their pedagogical beliefs, I have gained a greater understanding of my own pedagogy. From a personal point of view, becoming a mother during this study and being able to read about my study

participants own experiences of motherhood, has helped me to better understand my new maternal identity and how it may impact on my pedagogy. On a professional level, I have gained a much better understanding of how pedagogy develops over time and what teachers need in order to support pedagogical growth, and as a team leader I hope this will place me in a position to effectively support the practitioners I work with.

Although this is a small-scale study, it has highlighted the importance of gaining a greater understanding of who the women who teach young children are and that their voices are an important part of the educational community. Early childhood education is increasingly shaped by wider influences such as the political economy (Moss, 2014). In current neoliberal thinking, the development of early childhood is seen as important as children are valued for their future investment and what they will contribute to society (Sims & Waniganayake, 2015). With this focus on future employability comes an increased focus on aspects of the curriculum, which will support employability such as literacy and numeracy skills. Moss (2014) argues that this approach of quality and high returns in early childhood education is troubling and he offers an alternative rationale for early years that is based on democracy and the belief in the potential of people and the institutions they create. I believe that within either rationale, early years teachers play a crucial role in society as they are placed in an important position due to the power they have to influence young children. Therefore, I would argue that it is essential that we have a greater understanding of how early years teachers' pedagogical beliefs are formed and how these beliefs impact on the children they teach.

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Appendix A

ETHICS COMMITTEE – Participant consent form

Title of Research Project: Exploring the formation of early years teachers' pedagogical beliefs

Brief Description of Research Project:

This project is a case study of 20 early years teachers. The focus of the project is to explore how early years teachers form their pedagogical beliefs. It is suggested that pedagogy is multi-faceted and is influenced by different parts of a teachers' life. The first phase of the research project is to conduct life history interviews. These interviews will be audio recorded and will last as long as the participant is happy to talk. Participants will be asked to talk about their lives and to talk about events and experiences that have influenced their teaching. The second phase will be a reflective dialogue interview that will also be audio recorded. Participants will be asked to bring objects and photographs that represent their beliefs and practice and these will form the focus of the discussion. All interviews will take place within the school.

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Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and no data will be presented in a judgemental way. I understand that this research is for a PhD thesis and that papers may be presented at conferences and in journals. I understand that my identity and my schools identity will remain anonymous in the publication of any findings.

I consent to:

- Taking part in a recorded interview yes/no (initial)
- Data being used in Thesis yes/no (initial)
- Data being used in conferences
and in journal publications yes/no (initial)

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator or the Director of Studies/Supervisors.

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However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department.

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Ethical Information

The research for this project was submitted for ethics consideration under the reference EDU 12/038 in the Department of Education and was approved under the procedures of the University of Roehampton's Ethics Committee on 11.5.12.

Appendix B

Example of interview transcript

- Lucy:** And I suppose, I mean you were just saying about things like climbing trees do you think there's an element of allowing them to take risks? Do you feel happy with that?
- Anne:** Definitely.
- Lucy:** You don't feel that... I know health and safety's a big issue now isn't it? Do you feel you can manage that sort of...
- Anne:** Yes, definitely.
- Lucy:** ... pressure and allow them...
- Anne:** I did some work with the Early Years team, um, as a nursery nurse, when...
- Lucy:** OK
- Anne:** When I did my dissertation for my degree I did it around maths and stories. When I did my um, I don't know whether you call it 'dissertation', I can't remember now, for my Foundation Degree...
- Lucy:** Hmmm
- Anne:** ... it was all around um the woodwork bench and should Early Years children be allowed access to woodwork bench. And it was all literally around risk management and children becoming their own risk takers. Um and then I did some work with the Early Years team, going into settings and talking about the value of a woodwork bench.
- Lucy:** Oh wow, interesting.
- Anne:** So yes from a point of view of my parenting and from a point of view of my approach to teaching I'm very much 'let the children take risks'. I mean I was very much instrumental in getting the big climbing frame in the garden.
- Lucy:** Yeah I noticed that actually, they were coming down the pole, it's very high isn't it?
- Anne:** Yeah, and we've now got um a tree house with a fireman's pole and they've got the big climbing frame. So yeah very much so, um never as a parent did I rush over when the child had cut their

knee [interviewer laughs]. I shouted at them ‘get up, you’ll be fine [interviewer laughs]. The woodwork bench here... and I think that... I mean the whole risk taking thing is... when I was little, and my mum worked, I used to um spend a lot of time with my granddad...

Lucy: **OK**

Anne: ... in my granddad’s shed. And there were boxes of nails and screws...

Lucy: **That’s interesting.**

Anne: And um, and that’s what I remember, and my, my eldest son, when he was little, he had um a like a kid’s work tool set with a proper saw and a proper hammer...

Lucy: **Ohh**

Anne: ... and things. Um, so it’s yeah, I think it’s...

Lucy: **Oh that’s interesting.**

Anne: There’s so... I mean like yeah, that’s something that I feel quite strongly about. Don’t... you know when they want to climb on the tyres, don’t tell them they can’t...

Lucy: **Hmmm**

Anne: You know, point out the risks and see what they can do to lessen the risks for themselves and um...

Lucy: **Hmmm**

Anne: When they’re on the woodwork bench, if they stick in the nail in their finger, well next time they’ll move their finger [interviewer laughs].

Lucy: **Yeah**

Anne: You know, they’re not going to die.

Lucy: **No, yeah yeah, it’s true. That’s interesting. And just, you mentioned about your experiences as a child, so your memory of your granddad; can you remember other things about your childhood that you think might’ve affected the way you teach?**

Anne: Um, yeah I mean I was a complete tomboy.

Lucy: **OK**

Anne: And being an only child, had to go out and find my friends...

Lucy: OK

Anne: ... 'cause there was nobody living in my house.

Lucy: Hmmm

Anne: Um. So I was quite outgoing...

Lucy: Hmmm

Anne: Lots of friends, always in the thick of what was going on. Um, spent a lot of time with my grandparents, my parents split up, they separated and my mum had to go to work.

Lucy: OK

Anne: So um from five, six um school holidays really were with my grandparents.

Lucy: OK

Anne: Um, so we did lots of baking.

Lucy: Hmmm

Anne: Um we did lots of gardening, we spent a lot of time in the shed... a lot of time in the greenhouse um...

Lucy: Yeah

Anne: We did lots of sewing, just, yeah, lots of really... Yeah and that real... and that is me as a learner, I... you know, as much as I like to have my head in books, I'm a doer and that's how I learn, and a lot of my practice has been influenced by actually watching what other people do and having a go myself and...

Appendix C
Example of coded data

<p>Lucy</p>	<p>Just thinking about the curriculum and policies and that kind of thing, so how does that affect you here in your current job, so for example the EYFS?</p>	
<p>Jo:</p>	<p>Um that's quite, the new revised EYFS... some parts of it have been you know it's been good and I've quite liked the um the characteristics of effective learning.</p>	<p>EYFS document</p>
<p>Lucy:</p>	<p>Yeah</p>	
<p>Jo:</p>	<p>Is what, you know, underpins the pedagogy of Froebel and the school and it's... that's brilliant, that it's should be thinking critically, making choices...</p>	<p>Sees a link between EYFS and Froebelian principles.</p>
<p>Lucy:</p>	<p>Hmm</p>	
<p>Jo:</p>	<p>... making links, playing with engagement, that's been really nice, that that bit is there, because I did find it tricky that that was just in 'knowledge and understanding of the world' or something. That that was the only place that thinking critically, so actually you do it everywhere. But it's been... as a kind of as the leader of the kindergarten, I've found it tricky to, for all of us to understand it together and to make sure that everyone gets it and we're all. You know, it's the same stuff that's put in a... well it's similar.</p>	<p>Characteristics of Effective learning (EYFS)</p>
<p>Lucy:</p>	<p>It's consistency isn't it?</p>	
<p>Jo:</p>	<p>Um, but I do find it really useful and I think, I don't know whether that's um because I still feel relatively new to early years so it's a really good framework for ensuring we're covering everything and giving the children those, hopefully, rich experiences. But yeah I found it, it's really, it's just really hard making sure that we're all, as adults, we all pick up different things, and ensuring yeah that every Wednesday we'll do something,</p>	<p>EYFS is useful. Still feels new to Early Years so curriculum a good guide.</p>

	and then we have record keeping, and ensuring that we're all approaching it the right way, and seeing it the right way, you know. We do interpret things differently.	
Lucy:	Um you've mentioned Froebel who's obviously an influence. Are there any other, well not just necessarily theorists but people who've influenced you, so other teachers you've worked with, people who trained you or people you've read about?	
Jo:	Um... the people I've worked with, the people here at the kindergarten have been brilliant and actually Grace.. We both started at the same time...	Support from colleague – have given each other confidence.
Lucy:	Oh OK	
Jo:	... and both yeah probably, I'd done two years of teaching, she'd done a year and we both came back after years and years. Um um supported each other but yeah, learnt together and that was really... I think because, not, we, we weren't both thrown in the deep end but we'd both started and actually yeah coming here after being at a secondary school where it's very prescriptive um 'this is what you do, you've got three Year 9 classes, we're all doing a large scale sculpture for Year 9, the theme is hats, you know that's... it's not a very artistic thing. So actually coming and being with another um adult working together was brilliant because we both went, yeah we both learnt that actually what we would you know, we were quite nervous for the first month or two and then we went 'yeah this is good, we are doing the right thing', and you know like you were saying earlier, having that instinctive.... we started off un-instinctive and then that reality of going 'oh, ok' that was that was really good to work with, to have somebody who's learning at the same time or doing the same thing at the same time and recognising in each other that what you are doing is working or has got value or the children are appreciating it or the parents are appreciating it or um yeah. But also I think my granny more than anything.	Grown in confidence and feeling more instinctive.

Lucy:	Ahh OK	Influence from Grandmother (childhood)
Jo:	Just yeah just how she had a quiet um understanding or she'd just, you know she'd... Obviously I just think she did a lot of listening and watching.	
Lucy:	Hmm	Grandmothers attributes – Listening and watching, being open, not dismissive.
Jo:	And somehow she was just really good at saying the right thing at the right time without being, you know, how I would like to be able to talk to the children. We were given time and space to you know believe that we'd decided things for ourselves, do you know what I mean.	
Lucy:	Yeah, not being too sort of overbearing.	
Jo:	Not overbearing and not dismissive, being really open about you know, we could do anything we want. And that's you know, 'brilliant that you want to move out of home and go to art college, brilliant that you want to do that, brilliant that you get pregnant at age 23', you know that other people 'oh, quite young'. Gran just absolutely brilliant and a hundred per cent supportive that um that quiet...	
Lucy:	A bit of sort of anything's possible attitude?	
Jo:	Yeah but just also kind of just genuinely made you believe and she probably did 'cause she's your granny but I would like to, you know, be lovely that kind of um whatever you're doing that you're doing it well. Just giving you that confidence of seeing things in a positive light, you know and I think, nothing was a disaster, nothing was too much effort, it was just like, I love it, just somebody to quietly go, and notice little things you know, 'I can see that you've...' I don't know, 'see that you've got a new cup and I can see that you really like that', just those little comments at the right time, not overbearing, not... yeah.	
Lucy:	And do you try, do you try and do that	

Appendix D
Developing
themes
through coded
data.

Route into teaching/teaching career/ influence of training	what early years is about/reflecting on practice & pedagogy	Current job	Family background and childhood	own schooling	Being a mother	inspiration from others
p1, c1 worked in SEN school as a TA p1, c2 progressed in her role and was encouraged to start a degree by deputy p2, c3 worked in secondary SEN school, taught PHSE for 2 years, due to children having SEN did a lot of learning through play, was suggested she'd be good in a primary school. p8 c17 did GTTP training in year one, was bit of a shock, wanted to know more about early years as this is where foundations are laid. p8, c18 went into reception and loved it p10, c22 degree improved knowledge of early years curriculum and subject knowledge p10, c23 dissertation focused on learning styles, important for it to be fun and hands on for children, we don't all learn in the same way	p4, c8 enjoys early years and gets excited by progress children make. p5, c12 - learning through play, making it fun, encouraging them, finding out what their interest are. p5, c13 drawn to creative activities, such as painting. Helps support their communi cation. p6, c14 wants children to feel proud of what they've done, encourages them to use their voice to talk about their creations. p6, c15 values outdoor learning, created a garden with the parents last year. p6, c16 feels its important to work with parents. p8, c18 loves freedom of child initiated learning, adapting activities to suit children's interests p9, c20 NQT training - tries to bring at least one thing back to try, important to be positive p9, c21 important to be keen and enthusi astic when working in early years p13, c26 values creative area - so much you can do with a box, supports literacy writing, talking about what you've made. p14, c27 role play is important, children help set it up p16, c28 all children are different and develop at different stages and have different interests	p4, c11 school is lovely, supportive, good support through NQT year. p9, c19 appreciates feedback, was daunted by observations but had good support p12, c24 Trained in four form entry school - too big, likes current school, feels like a nice friendly family, nice atmosphere, likes knowing all the children and staff.	p4, c8 Mum stayed at home until she was about 13, parents didn't push her, wanted her to be happy. No one in family had been to uni before. Left school at 16 and worked in local company, felt like a family, enjoyed it and stayed for 8 years. p19, c32 Parents proud of what she has achieved. p22, c35 Mum was sent away as a child due to illness, has always given them love and affection, motherly love	p3, c6 remembers nice, caring, friendly teachers in both secondary and primary school. p3, c7 liked hands on, practical things at school as sport and maths	p2, c4&5 feels being a mother influenced her to do degree, wanted to be a good role model for her 2 children, but was hard juggling family and study. p4, c10 being a mature student and mother has influenced has she treats children in her class, has same expectations as her own children. p18, c30 Was firm with own children and from being a mum feels its important to focus on good behaviour and ignore bad behaviour p22, c36 can empathise with parents, big step letting go of your child.	p11, c24 Deputy and Head in previous school supportive and encouraging, didn't feel confident 'too old', but they encouraged NQT mentor and TA very supportive

Appendix E

Example of mind map

